

**GODZILLA RETURNS!**

# SCIENCE FICTION AGE

**FUTURE'S REVENGE**

By Paul Di Filippo

**JACK WILLIAMSON:**

**Buying Earth**

**KRISTINE KATHRYN RUSCH:**

**Tomorrow's Children**

**MYSTERY INVADERS**

By Resa Nelson

**1,000,000,000 A.D.**

By Eric Brown



\$3.99  
EAN 53 99  
JULY 1998



DISPLAY UNTIL

# THE INVASION



## 3 UNIQUE ALIEN SPECIES

Whether you command the nomadic Terrans, mysterious Protoss, or voracious Zerg, you must devise totally unique strategies to master the specialized units, abilities, and technologies of each.

## UNEQUALLED CAMPAIGN EDITOR

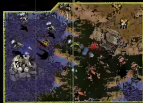
Construct individual missions or entire campaigns with unrivaled options and ease.

## INTENSE INTERNET COMPETITION

Challenge the world with FREE\* access to Blizzard's Battle.net.™ Up to 8 player Internet support including • worldwide player rankings, tournaments, and challenge ladders.

## REVOLUTIONARY SPECIAL EFFECTS

Real-time light sourcing, true line of sight, and an advanced translucency engine combine for unparalleled visual and tactical realism.



## MULTIPLE THEATERS OF BATTLE

Engage in a deadly mix of space combat, planetary assault, and covert base infiltration. Command Ghost Espionage Agents, Protoss High Templars, and Zerg Defilers as you seek to conquer the galaxy.

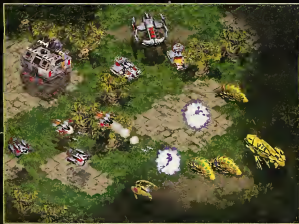


WWW.BLIZZARD.COM



Collector's Special Edition Boxes — Each box cover features one of StarCraft's 3 species. Available for a limited time only.

# HAS BEGUN



# STAR CRAFT™

AVAILABLE NOW ON WINDOWS® 95/NT CD-ROM

\*Free access to Battle.net requires access to the Internet. Player is responsible for all applicable Internet fees. StarCraft and Battle.net are trademarks and Blizzard is a registered trademark of Davidson & Associates, Inc. Windows® is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation. © 1998 Blizzard Entertainment. All rights reserved.



# SCIENCE FICTION AGE

## FICTION

**COVER:** *Luis Royo shows us one of the many many possible futures of SF ABOVE: Darrell Sweet has brought to life the work of many SF masters such as Robert Heinlein. For more masterpieces, visit the artist's Gallery on page 70.*

## DEPARTMENTS

### 7 EDITORIAL

There's something so right about being able to write.

### 8 LETTERS

Readers write to praise Niven and Pournelle, and complain about a politically correct future.

**10 BOOKS BY PAUL DI FILIPPO, D. DOUGLAS FRATZ AND, PAUL T. RIDDELL**  
*Heaven's Reach* concludes David Brin's marvelous space opera trilogy... or does it?

### 18 MOVIES BY DAN PEREZ

The cast and crew behind *Godzilla* talk about reinventing the King of the Monsters.

### 22 ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

Your guide to the best new games, audio, comics, collectibles and more.

### 26 SCIENCE BY GEOFFREY A. LANDIS, GREGORY BENFORD, AND JOHN G. CRAMER

Physicists may have figured out how to make SF's teleportation a reality.

### 70 GALLERY BY KAREN HABER

For an old-fashioned guy, Darrell K. Sweet's paintings are out of this world.

### 84 GAMES BY ERIC T. BAKER

Travel through time in search of a Legacy you'll want to inherit.

### 90 INTERNET BY CORY DOCTOROW

A selection of Net-based Science Fiction treats.

### 34 DEEP FUTURE

*By Eric Brown*

A billion years from now, with our sun near death, all the creatures of Earth will wonder, "Whatever became of the humans?"

### 39 COOLHUNTING

*By Kristine Kathryn Rusch*

Steffie made her mark chasing cool. Yet it wasn't until she stopped running that she made the coolest discovery of them all.

### 58 THE PURCHASE OF EARTH

*By Jack Williamson*

When the aliens arrived, they made us an offer we couldn't refuse.

### 64 THE PERIGEE OF THE MOON

*By Rosa Nelson*

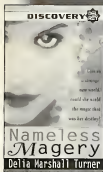
Maria cherished the old ways. Her son Pablo longed only for the new. Only the Moon Men could bring mother and son together.

### 76 JACK NECK AND THE WORRYBIRD

*By Paul Di Filippo*

There was no known cure for the Worrybird's ills, but that didn't stop the saints and the scientists from trying.

# There's something out there!!



A young student of the magical arts faces the ultimate test of her talents: repelling deadly invaders! A spellbinding fantasy debut...and this month's Del Rey Discovery.

A Del Rey Paperback



"[FARMER'S] IMAGINATION IS CERTAINLY OF THE FIRST RANK." —*Time*

All those who ever lived on Earth have been miraculously resurrected beside a mighty river on a world unknown. Now a remarkable cross section of historical figures will begin a wondrous journey to find out why....

A Del Rey Trade Paperback



Ten masters of imagination—including Harry Turtledove, Mike Resnick, Robert Silverberg, and Gregory Benford—remake history to answer the tantalizing question: "What *might* have been?"

A Del Rey Paperback

Reader Reviews | Contents | Special Offers | Free newsletter  
[www.randomhouse.com/delrey](http://www.randomhouse.com/delrey)  
Free book previews | Author information | Author interviews

On sale in June at bookstores everywhere  
Stories That Define Imagination  
A Division of The Ballantine Publishing Group

**DEL  
REY**

We interrupt  
your regularly scheduled reality...



It's the 25th century, but the Marines are still keeping the peace—this time on the planet Wanderjahr, where a rebellion threatens political and economic stability. But on a world where terror, betrayal, and murder are acceptable methods of government, who is the real enemy?

A Del Rey Paperback



Journey to a world where two races—reptile and human—have been locked in bloody warfare since the dawn of time. Some of fantasy's best writers, including Elaine Cunningham, Christie Golden, Ed Greenwood, Mary Kirchoff, Douglas Niles, and Dan Parkinson, spin a fascinating collection of adventures based on a story by New York Times–bestselling author R. A. Salvatore. A Del Rey Paperback

Reader Reviews | Contests | Special Offers | Free newsletter  
[www.randomhouse.com/delrey](http://www.randomhouse.com/delrey)  
Free book previews | Inside information | Author interviews

On sale in July at bookstores everywhere  
Stories That Define Imagination  
A Division of The Ballantine Publishing Group

**DEL  
REY**

# SCIENCE FICTION AGE

VOLUME 6

NUMBER 5

MARK HINTZ  
*Publisher*

CARL A. GNAM, JR.  
*Editorial Director*

SCOTT EDELMAN  
*Editor*

STEPHEN VANN  
*Art Director*

CHRISTINA KRÜG  
*Designer*

PATRICIA A. ALLEN  
CAROLE R. PASCOE  
*Copy Editors*

BRIAN MURPHY  
*Editorial Assistant*

## Contributors:

Eric T. Baker, Michael Bishop, David Beck,  
John Berkey, Adam-Troy Castro,  
Gregory Benford, Ronald Anthony Cross,  
Paul Di Filippo, Cory Doctorow, Bob  
Eggleston, D. Douglas Fratz, Connie Hirsch,  
Alfred Kamajian, Geoffrey A. Landis, Annie  
Lansford, Barry N. Malzberg, Resa Nelson,  
Dan Perez, Allen Steele, Charles Sheffield,  
Don Webb, Michael Whelan.

DIANE BONIFANTI  
*Business Manager*

KELLY KING  
*Fulfillment Consultant*

AMANDA SMITH  
*Finance Manager*

CARI WYNNE  
*Production Manager*

JULIAN CHRISTOPHER  
ALI LORRAINE  
*Production Assistants*

STEVE DORROWSKI  
*Circulation Manager*

WARNER PUBLISHER SERVICES  
*International Distribution*

Newsstand Consultant  
ARTHUR O'HARE

## Advertising Offices:

JOE VARDIA  
*Advertising Director*

KATE CHAPMAN  
*Advertising Assistant*

11305 Sunset Hills Rd. Reston Va 20190  
703-471-1556 / FAX: 703-471-1559

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Picture Credits: Tony De Torsion, 16; Don Dixon, 38; Don  
Moser, 79-82; Westwood Studios, 92.

## EDITORIAL

### There's something so right about being able to write.

THERE WAS SOME GOOD NEWS WAITING for me via e-mail the other day. Not only did I learn that I had been nominated for a Hugo Award in the category of Best Professional Editor (my third such nod), and not only were three *Science Fiction Age* stories nominated for Hugos in their respective categories ("Marrow" by Robert Reed and "Ecopolis" by Geoffrey A. Landis, Best Novella; "Moon Six" by Stephen Baxter, Best Novelette), but I also learned that a story of my own, "A Plague on Both Your Houses," had been nominated by the members of the Horror Writers Association to their Bram Stoker Award final ballot for Superior Achievement in the Short Story.

I am thrilled by the first two accomplishments. Who would not be? It has taken six long and hard years to steal that large a section of the final Hugo ballot. But I must be honest and state that it is that last notice which has me happiest of all, for on a personal level it is a signal to me that my editing persona has not completely subsumed my writing persona. I sold 40 short stories and a novel long before I ever started editing *Science Fiction Age*, yet it seems that many people I meet as I travel the convention circuit forget that I'd ever put pen to paper to do more than write captions or edit the words of others.

If I were to never write again, if I were henceforth to devote myself only to the ideas of others—I would not be the first to be swallowed up whole by a magazine. *Science Fiction* often eats its writers and spits them out as editors. It has become a long and not-so-noble tradition.

John W. Campbell, Jr. was perhaps the best and most influential science fiction editor of all time. His ability to discover new writers was unparalleled, as shown by the names of just a small fraction of those he shepherded to greatness: Lester del Rey, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein. So closely was he attached to cultivating new talent that the field's annual award for Best New Writer is named after him. And yet John W. Campbell had another life before he took over the position as editor of *Astounding Stories* (later *Analog*) in 1937, a position that was his until his death in 1971.

Campbell, for those who have forgotten, or never knew to begin with, was also the author of a number of classic tales of science fiction, written both under his own name and the pseudonym Don Stuart. His stories "Twilight" (1934), and "Who Goes There?" (1935, adapted to film twice as *The Thing*, 1951 and 1982) helped define the field in its early days.

But he was willing to give that all up in order to lead us to the Golden Age of Science Fiction. In explaining this decision, Campbell had stated that as a writer, he could only produce one story at a time. As an editor, however, he could turn out 10 times that many tales, via his influence on other writers. Of course, he was speaking of an older time, when editors such as himself would drop plot nuggets into the ears of writers, and expect those writers to flesh out the philosophical or scientific concepts that were troubling him. Peering into *Astounding* was like looking at the inner workings of Campbell's struggle to understand the universe. If he had any misgivings about the path not taken, he did not show them.

Campbell was but one of many. Gardner Dozois, editor of *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, turned from being a Nebula Award-winning editor to a Hugo Award-winning editor, now far too infrequently writing the incisive short stories for which he first became known. Stanley Schmidt, current editor of *Analog*, had published several novels by 1978, when he chose to walk in Campbell's footsteps. He, too, was mostly silenced as a writer when he chose to edit.

The list of writers silenced (or at least witness to a severe falling off in their output) by becoming editors goes on. So it is with no small sense of trepidation that I continue to edit this magazine. Will I continue to write? Will I continue to remember how to write?

The joys of writing and those of editing are different pleasures. Sometimes an editor is like an explorer, stepping over a mountaintop to see a glorious new land below, and then calling others to come and see. Sometimes an editor is like an interior decorator, advising that if only the couch were moved just so, the entire room would benefit. But what an editor is not is a creator from whole cloth, weaving something out of nothing. Only a writer can know the joy of doing that. As an editor, I can only follow behind where the writers wish to lead. As a writer I can do the leading myself.

So it's a good thing to know that if one tries hard enough, it is possible to do both. Too many choices in our lives are mutually exclusive; it would be a shame to think that the roles of writer and editor were in that same class. I wouldn't want to have to give up wearing either hat. I'd much prefer to embrace both roles forever, editing a magazine for a third of a century (like Campbell), while still managing to seek out my own brave new worlds. Thanks for giving me a bit of hope.

Scott Edelman

## Masterpieces of Science Fiction

**Signed by the  
authors!**

Mysterious Galaxy offers first editions of the finest science fiction novels on the market, signed by the authors, for reasonable prices. Look for new books to be offered every 6 to 8 weeks. There are limited quantities of these highly collectible editions, so act fast. Shipping rates vary outside the U.S., contact store for details.

CA residents please add 7 3/4% sales tax.  
Send orders to Mysterious Galaxy, 3904  
Convey St., #107, San Diego, CA 92111.  
Phone 800-811-4747 or  
619-268-4747.  
FAX 619-268-4775.  
Email [mgbooks@aax.com](mailto:mgbooks@aax.com).  
+Prices subject to change.+

### Our current offerings

**Lois McMaster Bujold  
Komarr**  
\$23.00+\$5.00 S&H  
Available Now

**David Brin  
Heaven's Reach**  
\$24.95+\$5.00 S&H  
June

**Kim Stanley Robinson  
Antarctica**  
\$24.95+\$5.00 S&H  
July

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
MC/Visa/Disc \_\_\_\_\_  
Exp. \_\_\_\_\_ Sig. \_\_\_\_\_

Many more in our catalog!

**mysteri-  
ous  
galaxy**

(800) 811-4747

<http://www.mystgalaxy.com>

## LETTERS

Dear *Science Fiction Age*:

Hi! Loved the interview with my favorite *Footfall* guys, Niven and Pournelle. (That sounds like a gang, doesn't it? Niven and Pournelle?) Anyway, they're great, and so is your mag. I have every issue since birth—yours, not mine.

Please thank Jerry for starting the computer revolution. (Or was he being immodest?)

Thanks for another great issue.

Wanda England

Dear Mr. Edelmann:

I just wanted to let you know what a great job you are doing on *Science Fiction Age*. I love getting it in the mail every month. The glossy look is always eye-catching, and the different sections in addition to the stories are wonderful. My favorites are the Alternative Media section and Cory Doctorow's Internet reviews.

Speaking of Mr. Doctorow, I loved his story in the last issue titled "Craphound." It was unique and interesting that he highlighted that special breed of people who persevere through junk shops and yard sales, and gave them a name. As a "craphound" myself, I congratulate Mr. Doctorow for recognizing the beauty of old things, and the stories that they have to tell.

In regards to the best of '97, I also enjoyed "Deep Space Sein." I am a huge Seinfeld fan, and felt that the story captured every nuance of the show.

James M. Palmer

Dear Mr. Edelmann:

In regard to your November '97 story "The Truest Chill": Full marks for a truly formulaic story. In the '60s SF stories were replete with Reds, rocketships, and rayguns. The recognized classics of that period are stories which broke free and rose above that level. Here in the Nasty '90s, we find instead a "story," actually no more than an incomplete character sketch, of an (a) pointlessly non-European (b) woman who presides (c) without benefit of a husband, over (d) a ghastly dysfunctional batch of an (f) "family," fathered quite literally by a passing stranger.

The story oozes such "politically correct" trendiness from every pore. It even makes abundant use of "e-mail"—nevermind that the story itself mentions that a good half of the ship's population is illiterate! Twenty years ago, "e-mail" did not exist. Twenty years hence, it will be completely passé. (Breaker, breaker—who's out there, c'mon? What, no

CB? Oh, this is '97, not '77. Sorry.) The mention of an URL would not have surprised me.

Why anyone would so consciously date themselves in an SF story I cannot imagine, particularly as it was not essential to the plot. As the literary rate in the "village" it supposedly takes to raise a child continues to plummet as a direct result of that centrally mandated philosophy, in 20 years it may be that vocoders designed overseas will take our already-indispensable spellcheckers and grammar-checkers to new heights, turning the incoherent and grammatically atrocious stammering of those with the barest grasp of even a single language into beautifully turned, precisely enunciated—and completely verbal—messages.

In the meanwhile, stories such as this will continue to delight collectors of the obscure, I suppose, just as early 1960s issues of *Amazing* do today, with their cover art of Gemini pressure-suit-clad astronauts at their permanently manned base on the Moon.

Gordon J. Neff

We beg to differ. No one can accurately predict the growth of technology. If we'd been publishing SF in the '40s that was set in the '90s, would you have taken us to task for assuming that television survived?

Dear Editor:

In the Recent and Recommended section of your Books department, the book *An Olaf Stapledon Reader* by Robert Crossly was briefly reviewed. Being a long-time Stapledon fan, I would like to know the publisher's address (Syracuse University Press) so I could order a copy. Such books are extremely hard to find here in Puerto Rico. My small Olaf Stapledon collection has been all through mail order. As a matter of fact, almost all of my SF collection has been by mail order. (Ironically, I have been able to buy *Science Fiction Age* at the local mail bookstore, but their selection of SF books is mediocre at best.)

David Del Valle

You—and all other Stapledon fans trying to keep the flame alive—can reach Syracuse University Press at 1600 Jamesville Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13244-5160.

Readers—please let us know how we're doing at *Letters to the Editor*, *Science Fiction Age*, 11305 Sunset Hills Rd., Reston VA 20190. For e-mail, use [scott@edelmann.com](mailto:scott@edelmann.com).





## Heaven's Reach concludes David Brin's marvelous space opera trilogy... or does it?



ABOVE: Artist Jim Barras brings David Brin's dynamic Uplift universe to life.

DAVID BRIN'S *BRIGHTNESS REEF* (1996) INTRODUCED us to the planet Jijo of the Fourth Galaxy and the six races of refugees who inhabited it. The majority of that volume was given over to a depiction of the stable cooperative culture that had evolved on Jijo over two thousand years, and how it differed positively from the competitive scrum that existed elsewhere among "half a million races." At the end of *Brightness Reef*, alas, this Eden collapsed as contact with the other grasping galaxies was rekindled by the arrival of three antagonistic ships, each with its own mission. The ship known as *Streaker*, crewed by dolphins and humans, was desperately seeking to deliver its mysteriously crucial cargo of ancient Progenitor artifacts to any honest Galactic authorities. The ship of the merciless Jophurs was in pursuit of these underdogs. And the Rothens, masquerading as humanity's patrons, were in search of simple commercial profit. There the first book ended.

The second volume, *Infinity's Shore* (1996)—as with many middle portions of trilogies, I thought—exhibited certain *longueurs*. Members of the three crews, along with various natives, mainly raced about Jijo in frantic fulfillment of their schemes for survival, revenge, or self-improvement. Any new information about the turmoil abrew in the Five Galaxies and the nature of Jijo's own enigmatic Holy Egg was dispensed in frustrating spoonfuls. Even the ingenious escape off planet by the *Streaker* in a flock of decoys failed to arouse. After several hundred thousand words, Jijo was becoming a bit of a bore.

Perhaps David Brin felt the same as I did, for in the trilogy's climax, *Heaven's Reach* (Bantam Spectra, hardcover, \$24.95, 448 pages), Jijo is pushed entirely offstage: with no loss of drama or content, while the author unveils enough new marvels—political, spiritual, intellectual, cosmological—to satisfy any reader of modern space opera. Our ingenious author gives us "shimmering rays" and "disintegrator beams," unravelling spacetime, transcendent intelligences clustered around black holes, and not one but five levels of hyperspace! So if you finish *Heaven's Reach* unsatisfied with this tapestry of intricately interwoven wonders, you're just being greedy.

All our friends from the first two books—the *Streaker's* crew, the quartet of juvenile Jijoon adventurers led by Alvin the hoon, and so on—are here. The only new character of any major significance in this climactic volume is one Harry Harms, an Uplifted sapient chimp. The funny, rambunctious Harry works for the Navigation Institute, patrolling E Space, the fifth level of hyperspace. This facet of Brin's universe is entirely new, and it is here that Brin exhibits an unexpectedly gonzo side to his writing. E

Space, you see, is an entirely subjective continuum: Its appearance depends upon the viewer. Also, its life forms are memes, independent idea-creatures made of spectral stuff. And finally, our entire sidereal universe is embedded in E Space as the Avenue, a tube of stars. Harry's excursions in E Space, where he eventually rescues two of the folks fleeing Jijo, provide a wacky counterpoint to the other doings in conventional space.

What exactly is happening elsewhere? Well, most importantly, the warp and weft of the actual universe is rippling, disturbing the very transit system that links the Five Galaxies into a single polity. From the Fractal Worlds (Dyson Spheres with a twist) to enemy-besieged Earth, stability is crumbling. Not to disclose too many of Brin's secrets, we eventually learn that this cosmological upheaval is a cyclic occurrence, that certain highly evolved life forms plan to take advantage of the chaos, and that humanity and their clients have a vital part to play with their consent or not. After many a thrilling incident, Brin manages to tie off his threads neatly, granting his cast challenges and rewards in equal measure.

Many of the newly revealed facets of Brin's universe seem to me to be retrofitted. This often happens in any series that extends for many years. (*Star Trek*, the first book, was published in 1960, nearly 20 years ago!) Although I wouldn't swear to it, I don't recall any previous mention of hydrogen-breathers or machine intelligences (the latter plainly a nod to Gregory Benford), or transcendent races (à la Vernor Vinge's *A Fire Upon the*

More worlds than you can explore.

More intrigue than you can solve.

More wars than you can win.

The **ALTERNITY**® Science Fiction Roleplaying Game launches you headfirst into the vast potential of the universe.

But don't fear. You're armed with the hardest-hitting weaponry the future can supply. Add mutations, psionics, cybernetics, and a wide range of skills, and you're ready for anything.

Which is good. Because that's just what you'll find.

It's infinity, after all.



**ALTERNITY Player's Handbook**

TSR #0933 • ISBN 40-7693-0725-3  
Full-color, 256-page hardcover book.  
Available April



**ALTERNITY Gamemaster Guide**

TSR #0934 • ISBN 40-7693-0726-0  
Full-color, 256-page hardcover book.  
Available May

# ALTERNITY

Science Fiction Roleplaying Game

No limits.

Customer Service (206) 624 0933 • Download the Fast Play rules and check out the entire lineup at [www.TSR.com](http://www TSR.com)



Deep [1892]). This kind of revisionism is not a bad thing if done well, and Brin carries it off with panache. What ultimately matters is not some foolish consistency, but Brin's ability to creatively and intelligently shatter his beloved *Uplift* universe and make us cheer on the destruction.

Paul Di Filippo

**Komarr**, by Lois McMaster Bujold. Baen Books, hardcover, 320 pages, \$22.00.

There can be little doubt that Lois McMaster Bujold's *Miles Vorkosigan* books are destined to become one of the SF field's longest and most popular series of novels. The ten previous books of the series, despite their lack of critical notice, have often been nominated, and in several cases won, major awards within the field, and appear near the top of the list whenever science fiction fans are polled regarding their all-time favorite SF novels.

This monumental popularity has occurred despite these novels lacking many of the qualities usually associated with the best science fiction. There are no new ideas in the Vorkosigan series, no new insights into the nature of the universe or humanity's destiny, no mind-expanding sense of wonder. (I am discounting here the four-act, no-leg quaddies, a marvelous creation introduced in *Falling Free*, a novel set in the same future but long before Miles' time.) Indeed, virtually all social and political aspects of Bujold's future interplanetary empire are regressive, having more in common with our past than any reasonably extrapolated future. Even the technology seems barely advanced beyond today, except for a few stock items such as interstellar spaceships and weaponry. The popularity of the series can be attributed primarily to the character of Lord Miles Vorkosigan, with whom a significant percentage of SF fans can strongly identify, and the fascinating plots and intrigues that he cleverly uncovers and foils in each book. Miles is a nephew to the Emperor. His mother was exposed by terrorists to a teratogen that left him physically damaged, but quick-witted and clever. Most of the earlier novels chronicled his adventures as, ostensibly, a mid-level government operative, but secretly as an agent for Imperial Security and leader of a mercenary fleet.

In *Komarr*, the eleventh novel in the series, Miles has just entered his thirties, and is assuming a new, more prestigious, role as an Imperial Auditor, one of nine trusted operatives who travel around the Barrayaran empire looking to uncover and solve problems. He has decided to tag along with a senior Auditor, Lord Vorhys, who is going to the planet Komarr to investigate what appears to be an unfortunate accident involv-



ing a transport freighter and the "soletta array" (a huge orbiting system of mirrors essential to the terraforming of Komarr).

Miles is immediately infatuated with Eka-terin, who is bright and capable, but being smothered by a dominating husband who

They stay on Komarr with Vorhys' niece, Ekaterin Vorsoisson, her son Nikolai, and her husband, Tin, who is also the Barrayaran bureaucrat in charge of the terraforming.

Komarr is a strategic planet, providing the primary route in the interstellar wormhole system for Barrayaran commerce, and is under Barrayaran control as a result of a military takeover some years earlier. Both Miles and "Uncle Vorhys" therefore suspect that foul play could have been involved, although it is hard to imagine why they would seek to damage the soletta array, which is the Komarrans' only hope for making their planet livable and productive.

## BOOKS TO WATCH FOR

**Immortals**, edited by Jack Dann and Gardner Dozois (Ace). Who says you can't live forever? Not these two editors or the contributors to this volume of short stories, all of whom tackle the topic in this anthology of classic tales on defeating mortality.

**Man-Kzin Wars: The Best of All Possible Wars**, edited by Larry Niven (Baen). The king of Hard SF pulls together a collection wherein he allows others into his alien playground. Military SF fans, prepare for incoming!

**The Silent**, by Jack Dann (Bantam). In his last novel he transformed the life of da Vinci into a science-fictional experience, and in his current opus he turns his hand to a decidedly different look at the American Civil War. Wherever Jack Dann goes, it's worth following him.

**Year's Best SF 3**, edited by David Hartwell (HarperPrism). A look at the best of '97 that includes a trio of tales plucked from these very pages. With good taste like that, you know the rest of the volume is going to be worth owning.

**Farewell to Lankmar**, by Fritz Leiber (White Wolf). This acclaimed reissue of Grandmaster Fritz Leiber's most popular work is completed with this volume, containing numerous stories and a complete novel. Collect your set of the adventures of Fafard and the Gray Mouse

**The Larger Earth**, by David Memmott (Permeable Press). Winner of the Rhysling Award from the Science Fiction Poetry Association, Memmott collects his series of inclusive poems about the Grounded Astronaut and his intriguing encounters with a malign universe.

**The Great War: American Front**, by Harry Turtledove (del Rey). The master of alternate history reimagines World War I with America divided. The U.S. and Confederacy join the war on opposing sides. The only sure winners are the readers.

**The Year's Best Science Fiction: Fifteenth Annual**, edited by Gardner Dozois (St. Martin's). There are over 250,000 words of fantastic fiction in this massive retrospective of the best SF of 1997. Featuring works by Stephen Baxter, Robert Silverberg, Nancy Kress and many others.

**The Night We Buried Road Dog**, by Jack Cady (Dreamhaven). The title story from this collection won the author a Nebula Award, and this book proves that it wasn't a fluke. Pick this up to dip into the rest of Cady's bizarre brilliance.

**Pulp Culture: The Art of the Fiction Magazines**, by Frank Robinson and Lawrence Davidson (Collectors Press).

Shed a tear, dear reader—for every fiction magazine today, there were once a hundred others. Gaze upon the best covers from the Golden Age of the pulps.



# LIES WITHIN LIES, TREACHERY WITHIN TREACHERY— MILES VORKOSIGAN IS RIGHT AT HOME!

## THE NEW NOVEL IN THE AWARD-WINNING VORKOSIGAN SAGA

Komarr could have been a garden planet someday—but the solar mirror vital to the terraforming of the conquered planet has been shattered by a ship hurtling off course. The Emperor of Barrayar sends Miles Vorkosigan, his newest Imperial Auditor, to investigate, even though the name of Vorkosigan has been hated on Komarr for a generation. Lies within lies, treachery within treachery—Miles is caught in a race against time to stop a plot that could exile him from Barrayar forever. His burning hope lies in an unexpected ally, one with wounds as deep and honor as beleaguered as his own.

0-671-87877-8 • 320 pp • \$22.00  
SCIENCE FICTION



### Praise for Lois McMaster Bujold and the Vorkosigan Saga:

"...a masterpiece...." —*Booklist*

"...first-rate.... space opera at its dramatic best...." —*Publishers Weekly*

"As ever with Bujold, *Memory* is a delight." —*Locus*

"...the very best in reading entertainment." —*Romantic Times*

"Extraordinary!" —*Chicago Sun-Times*

BAEN BOOKS Distributed by Simon & Schuster

# JOHN SHIRLEY BLACK BUTTERFLIES

A FLOCK ON THE DARK SIDE

Explicit, nightmarish, expert and ringing with truth,  
*Black Butterflies* will reach deep inside you...and cut.

\$16.95  
16 stories  
272 pages

John Shirley is an  
adventurer returning  
from dark and troubled  
regions with visionary  
tales to tell. I heartily  
recommend a journey  
with John Shirley at  
your side.  
—Clive Barker

Z

Mark V. Ziesing Books

PO Box 76, Shingletown, CA 96088 530-474-1580

[www.bigchair.com/ziesing](http://www.bigchair.com/ziesing)

[ziesing@bigchair.com](mailto:ziesing@bigchair.com)

## A NEW SCIENCE FICTION DRAMA FOR THE WORLD WIDE WEB

# DAEMONSONG

THE DREAM HAS BEGUN...

[HTTP://WWW.DAEMONSON.COM](http://www.daemonson.com)

discourages her from having a life of her own. While Miles slowly discovers numerous anomalies in the Komarran terraforming bureaucracy and works to uncover what is really happening, his fondness for Ekaterin grows, especially when he discovers that both Tien and Nikolai have an eventually fatal genetic disease that the family is hiding until the somewhat inept Tien can manage to save enough money for treatment.

When Ekaterin overhears Tien revealing secret plans to his subordinate, she realizes that her husband's desperation for money has driven him to be part of a terrorist conspiracy, and finally gets up enough nerve to leave him. When she tells him, he immediately rushes off to reveal the conspiracy to Miles in return for immunity, but they are both captured by the terrorists, who are a group of engineers working on the terraforming project. The terrorists escape after chaining both Miles and Tien outside, expecting Ekaterin can arrive in time to save them both. She arrives in time to save only Miles.

In the exciting final chapters one can expect in a Bajold novel, Ekaterin herself falls captive to the terrorists, while Miles finally solves the puzzle of what the terrorists are doing and where they must be. It should come as no surprise to any readers of the series that, in the end, Miles rescues Ekaterin from certain death, and the Barnayaran Empire from grave consequences, or that Ekaterin herself proves to be clever and resourceful enough to play a major role in foiling the terrorists.

Lois McMaster Bajold puts these traditional genre elements together better than almost any other writer working in the field today. *Komarr* is bound to please the many faithful readers of Bajold's *Miles Vorobosgn* series. With Miles only in his early thirties, the series shows no signs of moving toward closure. The ending of this novel indeed promises that Miles may finally have found in Ekaterin his perfect mate. In the next book, fans of the series just might be treated to wedding bells on Barnayar.

D. Douglas Fratz

**Black Butterflies: A Flock On The Dark Side, John Shirley, Mark V. Ziesing Booksellers, 256 pages, \$16.95.**

Punk and cyberpunk have quite a bit in common thanks to parallel evolution: their monikers were foisted upon them by outsiders while disavowed by their practitioners; their influences came from as markedly diverse assemblage of sources; and they both were unnatural groupings which collected completely unrelated talents under one pigeonholed banner. They both also changed the face of their respective artforms without making a direct impact, and they both boast a rabid following that was either too young to have experienced the initial boom or ignored them in favor of more mainstream material until it was trendy to accept them.

Cyberpunk fiction originally started as a

# Only NRI gives you all the tools you need to get published and earn good money as a writer

**W**ith 11,000 magazines in print and tens of thousands of new books published every year, money-making opportunities for writers are better than ever.

Now, with NRI, you can learn how to write what sells. Mastering the basics of good writing, marketing your work for publication, even setting up shop as a freelance writer — it's all covered in NRI's comprehensive at-home course.

Indeed, no other school gives you as much practical instruction or trains you as thoroughly in the professional techniques used by today's top writers.

## Get one-on-one, professional guidance

The moment you enroll, you can count on your NRI writer-instructors to offer you the advice and support you need to become the successful, published writer you want to be.

Through personal letters and in the margins of work you submit, you'll get specific, thoughtful recommendations on improving your technique. Word for word, line for line, your instructors take time to help you master the basics of good writing, then dare you to take risks and encourage you to push the limits of your creativity.

You'll master every aspect of your craft, from developing and communicating an idea to finding the right market for your work. Soon, you'll be doing the kind of clean, clear, strong writing today's publishers pay well for — and readers love to read.

## Train with and keep a powerful, full-featured computer system — today's best-loved writing tool!

Unlike any other school, NRI shows you how to sharpen your writing skills and add to your income with the powerful 75 MHz Pentium-class multimedia PC system included in your course. This system arrives at your doorstep fully loaded with Windows 95 and features a Super VGA color monitor, 1 gigabyte hard drive, 16 megabytes of RAM, 33,600 baud fax/modem, Microsoft Works integrated software, and more. Only NRI gives you

practical instruction with this invaluable tool, teaching you to use it the way the pros do: to develop your most creative work and then perfect it for publication.



And now, through NRI's PC Options Plan, you can upgrade to an even more feature-

packed system at special student prices!

Your computer will make the process of writing easier by eliminating tedious, time-stealing tasks. And it can even help you communicate with clients and publishers, schedule appointments and deadlines, maintain financial records, conduct research online, and much more.

## Send today for your FREE catalog

Find out all the details about NRI's innovative at-home writing courses by sending today for our free, full-color catalog.

Just fill out and mail the coupon below, or write to us at the NRI Schools, 4401 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008. Or

**CALL**  
**1-800-321-4634**  
**Ext. 3270**

**SEND TODAY FOR YOUR FREE CATALOG!**

**NRI School of Writing**

4401 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20008

☒ Check one FREE catalog only

☐ Fiction Writing ☐ Nonfiction Writing

Name  (Please print) Age

Address

City

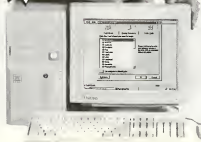
State  Zip

Accredited member: Distance  
Education and Training Council

A Division of The McGraw-Hill Companies

3232-0798

**NEW!**  
**75 MHz**  
**Multimedia PC!**



rebellion against the bloated science fiction of the late Seventies and early Eighties, much as punk intended to destroy the Isaac dinosaur rock of the same time. Many of its writers started with the stylistic experiments of Brian Aldiss and Philip K. Dick and went into a new direction by postulating a world where instead of humanity traveling boldly toward the stars, we remained locked on our own world due to human greed and conservatism. High technology was a focus of many of these tales, but as a warning that technology wouldn't solve all of man's problems, and in fact could cause quite a few if used solely for profit.

While cyberpunk as a movement lasted until about 1992 (some attribute its death to the Cyberpunk cover story in *Time* magazine, while others date it to the first monthly issue of *Wired*), it produced quite a bit of fascinating reading. Not only did interest in similar fiction bring up works by Dick and his protégé K.W. Jeter, but it caused an explosion of work from such diverse talents as Misha Nogha, Ernest Hogan, Paul Di Filippo, and a multitude of others. We of course cannot forget the most famous cyberpunk authors, William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, who pretty much created the now-clichéd images now associated with cyberpunk: hardwiring humans to computers, biomechanoid implants, and the first glimmers of the Internet.

One name, though, keeps disappearing when mentioning the history of the cyber-

punk movement. John Shirley was the literary equivalent of the Sex Pistols: he may not have created the genre, but he was the center of energy for old and new writers in it. Shirley's vicious little novels (*City Come A'Walkin'*, *The Elysium Trilogy*) and short stories (*What He Wanted*) started a blaze. While Gibson and Sterling stuck with cyberpunk and its Victorian doppelganger steampunk, Shirley moved on to experiment with high SF (*A Splendid Chaos*), horror (*Webones*), and even humor concealed as conspiracy fiction (*Silicon Embrace*). He's best known for his tight, intense short stories, the latest of which are bound in his new collection *Black Butterflies: A Flock on the Dark Side*.

Shirley is also known for his noirish screenplays (in particular, the original screenplay for *The Crow*), so it's no surprise that these stories are exceedingly dark. For instance, the story *Woodgrains* examines the problems with creativity, in which a sculptor who carves stunning homages to his favorite artists is encouraged to get their likenesses tattooed on him to help keep himself in context, only the tattoos decide to break free and go their own way. Shirley's love of music (having performed as lead singer for the Panther Moderns and songwriter for Blue Oyster Cult) infuses *Framing Telepaths*, wherein musicians and rock fans in general discover with certainty whether rock is inspired by God or Satan. As a finale, *Black Hole Sun, Won't You Come...* takes an old trope (what if

you had the opportunity to live forever, but you had to take the life force of mother to extend your existence) and wrings any enjoyment out of immortality.

John Shirley's fiction and nonfiction have managed to keep fans on their toes for two decades, and *Black Butterflies* demonstrates that Shirley's talents keep improving with time. While not completely science fiction or fantasy, the stories in *Black Butterflies* demonstrate the necessity for humanity (or the lack thereof) in the genre if it is to become a vital form of literature.

Paul T. Riddell

## RECENT AND RECOMMENDED

Nearly a quarter of a century has gone by since Jack Dann edited *Wandering Stars: An Anthology of Jewish Fantasy and Science Fiction*, collecting short stories of the fantastic, not only by such pivotal icons of the field as Isaac Asimov, Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg and Avram Davidson, but also bringing in a bit of the mainstream as well with Bernard Malamud and Isaac Bashevis Singer. Far too long out of print, Jewish Lights Publishing is bringing the volume back to life in a quality paperback format that features Asimov's original introduction, "Why Me?" Through the lens of Science Fiction, these thirteen tales grapple with issues of Jewish identity using the palette of SF to tell truths that are universal to us all, regardless of religious affiliation. □

# THE MEDIA CONNECTION EXPO

New York City -- Labor Day weekend - Sept. 5, 6, 7  
At Chelsea Piers (23rd St. and West St.)

Guests include:

Ethan Phillips

(Star Trek)

Tim Thomerson

(Xena, Trancers)



More Guests to Follow

Jim Calafiore

(Aquaman)

Peter Palmiotti

(Aquaman)

John Livesay

(Deadpool)

Tickets: In Advance - \$16/day -- \$45/weekend, At the door - \$20/day -- \$50/weekend

For info, contact:

Eric Lopkin, Lopkin Media Enterprises, 1325 East 17th St., Suite 268, Brooklyn, NY 11230

www.mediaconnection.net, e-mail: expo@mediaconnection.net



Exclusively from Paramount Pictures

# STAR TREK™

A Limited Edition Authorized Collectible.



**A dramatic collector's sculpture showcased in a crystal-clear dome.**

**IT'S THE ULTIMATE DUEL IN THE STARS!** The brave crew of the U.S.S. Enterprise™ fiercely battle their most ruthless adversary in a powerful Klingon™ Battlecruiser.

Racing through an asteroid belt at warp speed, these two legendary ships come to life in a spectacular fine art miniature. Every detail, from the Klingon Battlecruiser's reconnaissance sensor to the official seal of the United Federation of Planets, authorized by Paramount Pictures. Expertly crafted in Tapon® porcelain, a blend of powdered porcelain and resins that holds every intricate detail. Then meticulously hand-painted and numbered, and set on a custom base beneath a radiant dome.

Just \$37.50. This Officially Authorized Limited Edition will close forever after 95 casting days. Available only from The Franklin Mint.

**SATISFACTION GUARANTEED.** If you wish to return any Franklin Mint purchase, you may do so within 30 days of your receipt of that purchase for replacement, credit or refund.

**THE COLLECTOR'S CHOICE IN STARTREK™ COLLECTIBLES.**

**Shown approximately actual size of 5 1/2" (13.97 cm) in height.**

TM, ® & © 1998 Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved. STAR TREK and Related Marks are Trademarks of Paramount Pictures.

**A Limited Edition Fine Art Sculpture. Individually Hand-Numbered and Hand-Painted.**



The Franklin Mint  
Franklin Center, PA 19091-0001

Please enter my order for the Klingon™ Encounter. Officially Authorized by Paramount Pictures. I need **SEND NO MONEY NOW.** I will be billed \$37.50\* when my sculpture is ready to be sent. Limit: one sculpture per collector.

\*Plus my state sales tax and \$3.95 for shipping and handling.

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ ALL ORDERS ARE SUBJECT TO ACCEPTANCE

MR/MRS/MISS \_\_\_\_\_ PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ APT. # \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE # (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

TM, ® & © 1998 Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved. STAR TREK and Related Marks are Trademarks of Paramount Pictures. 16506-62-001

## MOVIES

By Dan Perez

# The cast and crew behind *Godzilla* talk about reinventing the King of the Monsters.



ABOVE: Matthew Broderick (at right) portrays Dr. Nick Tatopoulos.

BELOW: Maria Pijo as Audrey, an ambitious journalist, with Hank Azaria as Animal, her enthusiastic cameraman.

HE MAY LOOK DIFFERENT IN ROLAND EMMERICH and Dean Devlin's updated version, but *Godzilla* is still a force of destruction. In fact, the new version of the giant radioactive dinosaur mutant is even more destructive than his rubber-suited predecessors, carving in streets as he walks and knocking rubble off of buildings with the slightest brush of his scaly hide. But, as in their previous movie *Independence Day*, the writer/director/producer team of Emmerich and Devlin know that the spectacle of a giant monster trashing New York is given definition by the actors and actresses who witness the catastrophe. "These kind of movies really work only if the audience cares about the characters and the story," says Devlin. "I think the biggest mistake that most effects movies make is that they forget about the characters, which is why we try to write characters that the audience really cares about, because otherwise, there is no impact from all the amaz-

ing effects around them. If you fall in love with the characters, root for them and cheer for them or even if you hate them in the context of the story, then the effects really have meaning. Fortunately, with the help of our casting director, April Webster, we've been able to assemble an amazing ensemble of artists."

The cast includes Matthew Broderick as scientist Nick Tatopoulos and Jean Reno (*Mission: Impossible*) as the enigmatic insurance investigator, Philippe Roache. The movie also stars Hank Azaria (*The Simpsons*, *The Birdcage*) as a maverick cameraman nicknamed Animal, accompanied by his reporter friend Audrey, played by Maria Pijo. Another *Simpsons* cast member, Harry Shearer (*This Is Spinal Tap*), plays Charles Cuimán, a pompous television reporter, and Vicki Lewis (*News Radio*) plays the brilliant Dr. Elsie Chapman.

Emmerich and Devlin were both fans of Matthew Broderick, and had wanted to work with the actor for some time. "Ever since Roland and I started working together, we always wanted to work with Matthew Broderick," says Devlin.

"He's one of our favorite actors in the world and it's never worked out due to various schedule conflicts. Finally, with *Godzilla*, we were in a position where we could make a movie together and it has been a lot of fun. He brought a lot of humor to the part and really got into the spirit of the movie."

Devlin goes on to note that they had also admired Jean Reno's work. "...ever since *The Big Blue*, on through *The Professional*. As with Matthew Broderick, we specifically wrote the part for him. When we started writing the script, we thought 'who gets most upset when buildings are destroyed?' Well, insurance companies do. So we thought it would be interesting to have this French insurance investigator trying to find out the cause of all this damage. We immediately thought of Jean Reno."

Emmerich and Devlin didn't know whether the two stars they were writing the roles for would be able to make the movie, however. "We knew we wanted to work with them," Devlin says, "so before we even wrote the script, we called them and took them out to dinner and pitched our idea. We said 'Look, please don't commit to another project because we want you for this. We're going to write these parts for you but before we do, we'd like to know that you'd be willing to be in it.' They both said that if they liked the parts they'd do the picture. It was a unique opportunity for us because we were writing the script and dreaming the parts and we actually got the very people we had in mind, which was exciting."





ABOVE: Until *Godzilla* premieres, Devlin and Emmerich are keeping their creature under wraps—all you'll be seeing of the King of the Monsters are bits and pieces such as the above. BELOW: Jean Reno as the insurance investigator in the wake of destruction.

Broderick was interested in the film because it was different. "I liked Dean and Roland very much," he says, "had a couple of meetings with them and enjoyed the script. I like to try different film genres. Although I've done films like *War Games* and *Ladyhawk*, which had a lot of effects, or *Glory*, which was massive but in a different way, I'd never done a movie like *Godzilla* before."

Broderick's role fell into jeopardy, however, when he severely injured his knee just prior to principal photography on *Godzilla*. His role required running, kicking, dodging and climbing as the characters pursue the quick-moving monster. The actor immediately commenced a rigorous course of physical therapy and intensive exercise, which allowed him to meet the physical challenges of his role.

Broderick freely admits that he's never seen a *Godzilla* film all the way through, but says, "I certainly grew up on them and I don't think anyone wanted to make a tongue-in-cheek-looking-down-on-them kind of thing. We wanted it to be exciting and scary, but still, you have to have a sense of humor about this enormous lizard knocking over buildings in New York."

Broderick lives in Manhattan, and was happy to be shooting on his home turf, even if the massive production disrupted the city to some degree. "It was great because I live in New York," he notes, "so it was fun to be at the center of this thing that occasionally paralyzed the city, though not too badly, I don't think. For awhile, we shot at Madison Square where the Flatiron Building is and they

blocked off 23rd Street and Broadway and 5th, which is unimaginable—if you're from New York—what that could do to the city. But we shot at night, which wasn't too bad. It was amazing, just the size of the movie: It was exciting to watch how they did it, the number of sets, the size of the sets, the size of the cast, the amount of New York that was lit for night, blocks and blocks. It was astonishing to be a part of that."

Roland Emmerich's all-encompassing directorial style impressed Broderick. "I liked working with Roland very much," he says. "I thought he was a great director: honestly one of the best I've ever worked with. He has a great eye for details and he was always really good about explaining things: the effects that would come later, so we'd understand how the shot would look. It was a great combina-

tion—he could do all this massive action and special effects stuff and was also perfectly comfortable with staging a dramatic scene."

Like Broderick, Jean Reno was impressed by the magnitude of the film as well. "These were the biggest sets I'd ever seen," he says. "Even bigger than *Mission: Impossible*." But smaller-scale aspects of the movie appealed to him, as well. "I liked the humanity between the characters and the humor of the story. A lot of [the humor] came from Roland. I liked working with him, because he is somebody who has a real point of view. I like to work with a director who knows exactly what he wants, so when he gets it, we can move around that point a little bit. He asked me to play different colors at different takes, so he had more choices at the editing table. To work with someone like that, with a definite perspective but who gives us room to explore, that is very nice for an actor: very comfortable."

Hank Azaria, who plays Animal, got his role in the film a bit more by chance. "Originally, we had written the role very differently," says Devlin. "I actually ran into Hank Azaria at a restaurant. We started talking and I realized that this is a guy who does really incredible characters and every part he plays is totally different. I talked it over with Roland and he liked the idea of an actor who could create something completely different from what we had in mind. When we met with him we immediately felt that this was a guy who could bring a whole lot more to the role that what was on the page. He's just a wonderful



A NEW DIMENSION IN ADVENTURE FROM  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# GARY PAULSEN



**T**he Planet of the Apes meets Robinson Crusoe in this gripping new story of a young man mysteriously transported to a world of creatures fantastic and fierce. Join him on his journey as he faces the terrors and challenges of making a new life in a new world.



**ON SALE NOW WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD.**  
www.bdd.com



## Original Fantasy and Science Fiction Art

REPRESENTING  
**DARRELL K. SWEET**  
AND 40 OTHER LEADING ARTISTS

### Worlds of Wonder™

PO Box 814-SFA, McLean, VA 22101  
(703) 867-4051 fax (703) 790-9519  
Come visit our website: <http://www.wow-art.com/>  
New 1600 Color Catalog \$10 available  
\$10 ppd U.S. (\$14. overseas)

actor who comes to the project with an enormous amount of energy and love for Godzilla, because he is a Godzilla fan from way back."

"It's true," Azaria says. "For some reason the Godzilla movies were on every Saturday morning in New York, where I grew up. When *Godzilla vs. King Kong* came out, that was a big deal when I was growing up. I remember actively worrying about who would win."

Azaria describes his character as "a very New York Italian sarcastic cameraman. He's one of those guys who will do whatever it takes to get a shot, so he's always running around trying to photograph Godzilla. Of course, most people are running away from Godzilla but I'm running towards him. A lot of times, the hundreds of extras were running from Godzilla, looking behind them as I was running forward. So I was constantly smashed by all the extras running forward and looking back. I almost died many times. One of the extras really barreled into me as he was running away. I got banged pretty nicely in the face. That was the biggest laugh that day and we got it on film."

For Azaria, a veteran of *The Simpsons* (as well as *Mad About You*, which stars his girlfriend Helen Hunt), acting to a then-unseen Godzilla was perhaps less of a challenge than that faced by his co-stars. "For some of the actors, in the beginning, it was a little weird," he says, "acting to nothing and it wasn't for me. I wondered why this wasn't a problem for me, but I realized that on *The Simpsons* that's all we do: we're always screaming and yelling and being frightened of nothing. It seemed normal to me because I do it all the time on *The Simpsons*."

The comedian in Azaria comes out when describing actual takes. "Most of the time we just had a lot of production assistants walking around with Xs for eyeline purposes and people on megaphones announcing what Godzilla was doing. That got a little silly. 'And he's angry! And he's walking!' We started making stuff up, like: 'We're not sure what he's doing; he's hard to read. Now he's crying! Now he's impressed with your necktie!'"

Harry Shearer, another *Simpsons* performer, plays a television reporter with a suspiciously familiar delivery style. He notes that the production was plagued with cold, wet conditions which included, at one point, a mild tornado that swept through the set. "We shot in New York in the beginning of May," Shearer says, "and it was still like 36 degrees at night. It was about 2:30 in the morning and we were making rain. After we finished the shot, they turned the rain machines off and we were standing there in, I swear, this white stuff. I know people will think I'm making this up, but it was so cold that the residual rain lingering in the air had turned to snow. But I must say it was fun because Roland was having the time of his life. He was just great. Even in the midst of these weather agonies, I just think it's the way he's wired; he just had a great time and sort of swept us along with the flow of it." □

Two  
Rare  
Game Cards  
In Every  
Pack!

# 5 BABYLON™

Collectible Card Game

## Evolve or Die

The Galaxy's Hottest  
Card Game Just Got  
Even Hotter!

200 NEW CARDS TO SUPPORT ALL RACES AND  
SITUATIONS DURING A TIME OF TREACHERY  
AND STRUGGLE

THE GAME SYSTEM IS  
VERY... INOVATIVE.  
[IT] WILL FIND ITS  
WAY INTO THE TOP  
10 TRADING CARD  
GAMES.

- SCR YE MAGAZINE, THE  
GUIDE TO COLLECTIBLE  
CARD GAMES

# The Shadows

BONUS: FINISH THE  
ONLY 2500 CARDS AUTO-  
GRAPHED BY "MORDEN"  
ACTOR ED WASSER.



PRECEDENCE

B5events@aol.com  
[www.eternity.com](http://www.eternity.com)



## Lizard KING

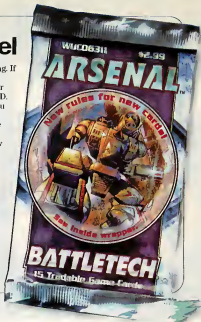
Jim Morrison, rock icon, was known far and wide as the Lizard King, but when it comes to the sounds of science fiction, as far as we're concerned, there's really only one Lizard King—and that's Godzilla, King of the Monsters. Whether Godzilla is beating on Mothra or teaming up with Jet Jaguar, this rubber-suited reptile has always inspired wonderful scores to match the rage, terror, and excitement we see on the silver screen. How can you not like him? Sure, he breathes fire, steps on cars, and destroys the better half of downtown Tokyo in his spare time—but, at least he does it all to a great soundtrack. GNP Crescendo Records' *The Best of Godzilla: 1954-1975* contains 16 suites and themes that will have you wishing Akira Ifukube, the original composer, could have

added his genius to the Deslin and Emmerich *Godzilla* blockbuster remake. In addition to providing the cream of the crop of the best of the 22 film scores, a pamphlet with the CD provides the original Japanese titles of each film, director and composer names, and short synopses of each film. For further information, visit [www.gnprecords.co.jp](http://www.gnprecords.co.jp).

## GAMING

## Have **MECH** Will Travel

War. What is it good for? Absolutely nothing, or so goes the old rock song. If you ask us, however, war can be pretty entertaining. And Wizards of the Coast makes it even better with their latest and greatest expansion set for the card game *BattleTech: Arsenal*. It's 3050 A. D. and war is the only way of life. Fortunately, you live here in 1998 A. D. and get to play General with the flip of a card, instead of having to live through these far-off future wars. This fourth limited edition expansion pack allows for new rules on vehicles, battle armor, and 'Mechs. *Arsenal* promises to bring more metal to the battlefield, so be advised to play strategically. With Elementals, assault tanks, and fast assault vehicles, you must match wits with your opponents to come out on top. These expansion cards are available in 15-card booster packs with a recommended retail price of \$2.99. Players must already have a deck of the original *BattleTech* cards in order to play. For further information on *BattleTech*, a hit in over 20 different countries from Australia to Taiwan, check out [www.wizards.com/BattleTech](http://www.wizards.com/BattleTech).



## PRIOR HEROES

In the Gospel according to Prior—comics creator Rob Prior, that is—the likenesses of Science Fiction TV and screen stars Mark Hamill.

Jason Carter, Pat Tullman, Walter Koenig, Peter Jurasik, Bill Mumy, Kevin Eastman and a legion of other famous faces of the fantastic will be resurrected in his new comic series *Lost Heroes*. In an effort to make his new book unique, artist and writer Rob Prior pulled off a comic book and SF first. He actually "cast" the heroes and villains of his tale with familiar faces that everyone loves to love (and hate) from the television, film, model, and comic industries. Each page of the special collectors edition first issue isn't just drawn the old-fashioned way—

it's actually painted on a 20" by 30" board, with the the splash pages painted on 30" by 40" ones. Though technically speaking, what readers

of *really* the first issue. An issue zero has been produced as a prequel with a two year arc. It starts out with the Gods and ends in an all out bad-guys-turned-heroes in this first issue, but that's just fine—issue #0 is still initial. To avoid losing out, visit their website at [www.dave4carts.com](http://www.dave4carts.com).



## COMICS

are just seeing in their comic shops now is not *really* the first issue. An issue zero has been produced as a prequel to the series, which Prior sees as, "a story with a two-year arc. It starts out with the Gods and ends in an all out battle for humanity." We don't get to meet the actors-turned-heroes in this first issue, but that's just fine—an issue #0 is still full of beautiful art and brimming with potential. To avoid losing out, visit their website at [www.davidcezarts.com](http://www.davidcezarts.com)



# BABYLON 6"

This Fall, *Babylon 5* will be over. Done. Adios. Kaput. And after *B5* is six feet under, what will we have to look forward to? Well, J. Michael Straczynski is cooking up his *Babylon Project: Crusade*, the next saga in his incomparable universe, but what is a *B5* fan to do in the mean time? It doesn't take a psieop to figure the answer to that one—it's time to reach out and touch your favorite SF characters, and *Toys R Us* has just what you need. The second wave of *Babylon 5* action figures is now rolling off the production line. Four accurately detailed 6" figures are available for your collecting pleasure. These figures are expertly sculpted and each one comes garbed in his (or her) dress uniform, and a miniature spaceship specific to their race. Wave II consists of the gone but not forgotten Lt. Commander Susan Ivanova (whose hair is placed in her trademarked ponytail), the ever-faithful Vir Cotto, fallen Ranger Marcus Cole, and the enigmatic Vorton Ambassador Kosh. Now you can do more than just watch J. Michael Straczynski's cosmos from afar—you can hold it in your own hands! For more information check out <http://www.exclusivepremiere.com>.



## NEW ON VIDEO

# Starship VCR

Try not to be bugged as more SF flicks swarm into your local video store:

**>Gattaca:** Ethan Hawke and Uma Thurman starred in this futuristic thriller that used the future of cloning and genetic engineering to explore the nature of humanity. Ernest Borgnine also appeared in this suspenseful 21st Century tale, which received an Oscar nomination for its art direction. This one sped through theaters, and is well worth tracking down on video.

**>Starship Troopers:** Robert A. Heinlein's classic Hugo Award-winning novel is translated to the screen by director Paul Verhoeven. The cinematic interpretation of this intergalactic warfare proved controversial both to fans and the press alike, though for different reasons, but FX guru Phil Tippett's monster bugs are worth seeing whichever position you take.

**>The Fantasy Worlds of Irwin Allen:** He was responsible for some of our favorite sci-fi TV series—*Lost in Space*, *Land of the Giants* and *The Time Tunnel*—as well as hit films such as *The Poseidon Adventure*. Irwin Allen was the soul behind some of our classic memories, and this ninety minute cassette, hosted by

Bill Munny and June Lockhart and featuring special guest Jonathan Harris, pays tribute to one of our greatest creators. The cassette includes classic scenes, as well as never before seen outtakes.

**>The X-Files:** Six more installments in the paranoid adventures of Dana Scully and Fox Mulder are being released from the show's award-winning third season. Each triple pack of video cassettes includes six exclusive collector cards, as well as interviews with the show's creator, Chris Carter. Episodes available include "Piper Maru/Apocrypha," "Pusher/Jose Chung's From Outer Space" and "Wetwired/Talitha Cumi."

**>Close Encounters of the Third Kind: The Collector's Edition:** Steven Spielberg's classic film is shown in a new director's cut that will allow you to see the film



as its creator wished, in a digitally remastered version that includes newly-restored film elements. Also includes a "making of" featurette containing new interviews with Spielberg, the cast, and the crew, as well as showcasing exclusive behind-the-scenes footage.

**>Movie Magic:**

**Disasters at Sea:** The award-winning special effects series continues its examination of FX from today's hit movies. This volume focuses on oceanic nightmares, starting with James Cameron's un wavering vision and state-of-the-art FX on *Titanic*, and including the new digital effects used to create the prehistoric creature in *Deep Rising*. The underwater action-thriller *Crimson Tide* is covered as well.





J A B B A ' S   P A L A C E   -   S P R I N G   1 9 9 8

**DECIPHER®**  
The Art of Great Games®

[www.decipher.com](http://www.decipher.com)

TM & © 1998 Labyrinth Ltd. All rights reserved. Used under authorization by Decipher Inc. TM, © & © 1998 Decipher Inc. All rights reserved. Decipher Inc., Box 56, Norfolk, VA 23501

## Physicists may have figured out how to make SF's teleportation a reality.



Star Trek's faded transporter room is far from just around the corner—but even now our top scientists are hard at work on the puzzling problem.

**T**ELEPORTATION: THE ABILITY FOR A PERSON TO BE “beamed” from one place to another. It has been one of the most fascinating dreams of science fiction—but also the technology that has always seemed the farthest from reality. Yet recently the prestigious scientific journal *Physical Review Letters* has been publishing papers that describe “quantum teleportation.” Is a transporter beam actually on its way to becoming a reality?

Understanding quantum teleportation will require a deep knowledge of quantum mechanics, so *Science Fiction Age* sent its quantum correspondent and freelance physicist, Dr. Geoffrey Landis, to interview the most adept quantum physicists in the science fiction field. Dr. Gregory Benford is both a popular and award-winning science fiction writer, and also a professor of physics at the University of California, where he studies the galactic center. His most recent novel, *Cosm* (Avon 1998), explores the implications of the new physics of wormholes and baby universes. Dr. John G. Cramer is a physicist at the University of Washington and a renowned science fiction writer. His SF novel *Einstein's Bridge* (Avon 1997) discusses teleportation not merely between different stars, but between different universes. And Dr. Landis, in addition to being a scientific man-about-town, was just nominated for a Hugo Award for his story “Ecopoetis” in *Science Fiction Age*.

**LANDIS:** Recently there have been a number of scientific papers on the subject of “quantum teleportation.” What is this? Could it lead to transporter beams, as we’ve seen in science fiction?

**CRAMER:** The idea of quantum teleportation was introduced in 1993, when a group led by Charlie Bennett of IBM

proposed a scheme which grew out of ideas about quantum cryptography. Basically they proposed a concept for copying a complete quantum state from one place to another. Recently several research groups have succeeded in “teleporting” photons using the technique.

They use an “entangled” quantum state as a faster-than-light channel to send the information for reconstructing the state, but they also need a normal slower-than-light channel to send the “key” that decodes the quantum information. The quantum state of the object to be teleported is mixed with the stay-at-home part of the entangled state, measurements are made on the mixture, and the measurement results transmitted to the teleport receiver. Then the twin entangled state is transformed, based on the received measurement information.

Several rules emerge from this: (a) the actual teleportation is always slower than light; (b) the more complicated the system, the more complex the measurements that must precede the information transfer; and (c) the initial system is inevitably destroyed by the measurements. Could it lead to transporter beams, as we’ve seen in SF? Not without a huge amount of further development. The work by Bennett et al. simply demonstrates that teleportation, as in van Vogt or *Star Trek*, does not violate any physical laws.

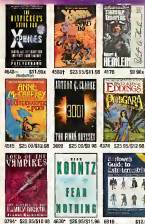
**LANDIS:** In essence, what they are doing is saying that you can “copy” a quantum state in one place—although the copying process will destroy the state, by measuring it—and then send that information to duplicate it somewhere else. As John notes, quantum teleportation cannot be faster than light; you still have to send the classical information by ordinary means. This is an important difference from the type of teleportation used in most SF.

**CRAMER:** In quantum mechanics it is possible to generate two particles (for example, photons or electrons) so that conservation laws require them to be in the same (but as yet undetermined) state. These can then be separated by a great distance, even light years, yet a measurement on one of the systems instantly puts the other system into the identical state. These are called entangled states.

**BENFORD:** Using entangled states for teleportation is nifty, but it has severe limitations—and lacks drama. There are careful preparations required, and delays because of light speed limits.

**LANDIS:** Don’t limitations make for more drama, instead of less?

**BENFORD:** Maybe you’re right, a good SF writer



**TAKE 5 BOOKS FOR \$1 WITH MEMBERSHIP**

## 7 REASONS TO JOIN NOW!

1. **Joining is easy.** Choose 5 books for \$1. Your bill (including shipping and handling) will come when membership is confirmed.
2. **Your satisfaction is guaranteed.** If you're not happy with your 5 books, cancel now! You'll own nothing.
3. **Save up to 65% off publishers' hardcover edition prices.** Every book we offer is a high-quality, full-text edition, sometimes altered in size to fit special presses. Just pick at least 4 more books at our regular low prices during your membership. Take up to 2 years! Then you may resign any time.
4. **Extra bonus!** Take a 6th book now for \$3.98, plus shipping and handling, and reduce your membership agreement to only 3 books.
5. **A FREE Club Magazine** comes to you up to 17 times a year — plus up to 2 special issues. Each reviews the Featured Book Selections plus dozens of alternate books. Some are exclusive Club editions you won't find anywhere else.
6. **Ordering is simple.** Featured Book Selections are sent to you automatically. To cancel — or order other books — simply mail in your Member Reply Form by the marked date. Shipping and handling (plus sales tax, where applicable) is added to each order. You'll always have 10 days to decide. If your Member Reply Form is late and unwanted books arrive, please return them at our expense.
7. **Easy Ordering.** As a member, you can also order books via our Web site ([www.sffc.com](http://www.sffc.com)).



**Science Fiction**  
www.sffc.com

MAIL TO: The Science Fiction Book Club  
6050 East 30th St., PO Box 6367  
Indianapolis, IN 46286-8367

Please write book numbers in this box

**YES!** Please enroll me in *The Science Fiction Book Club* according to the risk-free membership plan described in this ad. Send me the 5 BOOKS I've indicated. Bill me just \$1, plus shipping and handling.

**SAVE EVEN MORE!** Send me this book now and reduce my commitment to 3 books. Bill me just \$3.98, plus shipping and handling. (Books that count as 2 choices are not eligible.)

Mr./Mrs. Miss/Ms. (Print name) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone, please (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

If you're under 18, your parent must sign here.

Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members serviced from Canada where offer is slightly different. Sales tax added where applicable. We reserve the right to reject any application.


NS183 14

NS183 14

NS183 14

NS183 14

NS183 14

NS183 14

NS183 14

NS183 14

NS183 14

NS183 14

\* English version only included — Science Fiction  
© Copyright 1997 by Science Fiction Book Club, Inc.  
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.  
© 1997 Science Fiction Book Club, Inc. All rights reserved. SFFC is a registered trademark of Science Fiction Book Club, Inc.

should turn those into plot twists. Somebody cleverer than me; how about John?

**CRAMER:** Well, I haven't ventured to write the story, but here's a scenario I used in an "Alternate View" column. You send out an exploration ship filled with "blank humans," macroscopic entangled states that are twins of similar states held in storage on Earth. At 1 percent of lightspeed, it gets to Tau Ceti in 1,200 years. When it arrives, robots unload the ship and set up a teleport receiver unit for each "blank" entangled state. When everything is ready, the colonists step into transmitter units on Earth, where they join the stay-at-home entangled-state blanks and are destructively "measured" by the transmitter. The results of the measurement are recorded and sent by radio or light beam to the receivers at Tau Ceti. Twelve years later, Earth time, the beamed information is received at Tau Ceti, the transformations on the blank entangled states are performed, and the colonists emerge from the receiver units. For the teleported colonists no subjective time at all has passed, and they have had a perfectly safe trip because it was known that the receiver apparatus had arrived and was fully checked out before the transmission was made.

**BENFORD:** John's entangled-states teleporter has, from any point of view, a severe downside: You have to get killed. The measurement Earthside disintegrates you, and years later a copy appears on Alpha Centauri. Maybe I'm a bug about this because I'm an identical twin and grew up with people mistaking me for my brother. I always knew who

was who—the Self is an internally defined state, not externally. Put it this way: Suppose the transporting speed or distance was such that the copy appears a century, or a hundred centuries later... doesn't this affect your willingness to be murdered so that a copy thinking it's you can walk beneath alien suns?

**LANDIS:** I'm not so sure that this is any different from any other type of transportation—after all, if I travel to California by flying, the "me" in Cleveland doesn't exist any more, and instead a "me" exists in California. I do find it interesting that, in quantum mechanics, information cannot be copied, it can only be moved from place to place. If I were to teleport to Alpha Centauri, it is the information that composes me that would arrive at Alpha-C... is the information actually me?

**BENFORD:** Good point, Geoff, about flying to California—a continuous process. I suspect one feels differently if the transport is instantaneous in one's personal view, and depends on being taken apart (to make all those keen quantum measurements). Me, I'd rather fly.

**LANDIS:** As far as I'm concerned, it would be a great way to travel—no more cramped airline seats! If it takes me four and-a-half years to get to Alpha-C... well, hell, I still get there faster than a spaceship. I don't have to deal with plastic spacecane food, and it seems to take no time to me.

**BENFORD:** I'd rather go business class, read a book, and not trust the U.S. Postal Portal to teleport me correctly. I still feel that

every time Kirk and Spock beam down, they die. I wouldn't do it. I believe that later somebody patched up this issue by asserting that somehow the beam chamber actually sends atoms to anyplace you like (notice they don't have to have conveniently placed booths for a receiver, either). So the original particles are kept, so what? If I take you apart into atoms, you're dead. Later resurrecting you is polite, sure, so long as one believes the process is error-free. In real life, how many people would take such trips? In the *Trek* universe, do people still use cars, etc. on Earth?—or do they just beam around to get the groceries?

**CRAMER:** The real problem with any such scheme is the "catbox" from the Schrodinger's Cat paradox. How do you store any entangled system of atoms so that they have absolutely no interactions with the external world until you are ready to impose your received information? This is a problem that physicists have not yet solved, and until they do, we're stuck with using photons.

**LANDIS:** I'm not sure that storing entangled states is necessarily that much of a problem. Photons can be stored in mirrored boxes, or more practically in a loop of fiber optic. More likely, though, you can store an entangled state in the form of quantum spin in any atom with an unpaired electron. How long does the spin remain coherent? If the material is cold enough, I would think it would remain in a coherent quantum state for a very very long time. Reading the informa-

• University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado •  
• August 13 - 16, 1998 •

Speakers include: Mike Griffin, Robert Zubrin, Chris McKay, Carol Stoker

Sponsors: National Space Society • British Interplanetary Society • The World Space Bar • United Society in Space  
Pioneer Astronautics • The Boulder Center for Science & Policy • Fisher Space Pen Co.



# MARSOCIETY

## FOUNDING CONVENTION

This summer, over 1000 scientists, engineers, visionaries, philosophers, explorers, businessmen, journalists, historians, politicians, and just plain folks will join in a historic gathering to found an association committed to the exploration and settlement of Mars by both public and private means.

Be there.

Call For Papers

Papers for presentation at the convention are requested dealing with all matters (science, engineering, economics, and public policy) associated with the exploration and settlement of Mars. Abstracts of no more than 300 words should be sent by May 31, 1998 to:

Registration Fee: \$140 before June 30, 1998 (\$160 thereafter)

MARS SOCIETY • BOX 273 • INDIAN HILLS, CO 80454 USA

Further information: [www.nw.net/mars](http://www.nw.net/mars)

Official Sponsor  
of the Mars Society



Watch *Babylon 5*: Mondays-Fridays at 7pm (et)

Based on the Warner Bros. television series

created by J. Michael Straczynski.



FOR FOUR YEARS,  
IT'S BEEN

ESSENTIAL VIEWING.

NOW, IT'S ALSO

**REQUIRED READING!**



On sale in May

**BABYLON 5 SECURITY MANUAL**  
Jim Mortimore with  
Allan Adams and Roger Clark

The definitive guide to everything there is to know about maintaining security aboard the Babylon 5 space station, in the words of the security chiefs themselves. Featuring vital information on technical operations, structure, personnel, key alien life-forms, and more—plus technical illustrations of weapons, crafts, and uniforms, and comprehensive maps of the entire station.

A Del Rey Trade Paperback  
0-345-42453-0/\$18.95/\$26.50 in Canada

**BABYLON 5:  
THE COMING OF SHADOWS**  
Jane Killick

The second in a comprehensive series of guides to each season's episodes! Featuring two fascinating behind-the-scenes essays—"By Any Means Necessary: Making *Babylon 5* on a Budget" and "*Babylon 5*'s Second Season"—plus complete synopses of all twenty-two second-season episodes, including "Points of Departure," "Hunter, Prey," and "The Fall of Night," with an in-depth analysis of each.

A Del Rey Trade Paperback  
0-345-42448-4/\$11.00/\$14.95 in Canada



On sale in May

Also available:

**BABYLON 5: IN THE BEGINNING**  
Peter David

**BABYLON 5: SIGNS AND PORTENTS**  
Jane Killick

**CREATING BABYLON 5**  
David Bassom

On sale now

Coming in June  
**BABYLON 5:  
POINT OF  
NO RETURN**



Stories That Define Imagination

A Division of The Ballantine Publishing Group

Booker Reviews Carbine Serials Store New operators  
www.randomhouse.com/delrey  
For book prices visit [www.randomhouse.com/delrey](http://www.randomhouse.com/delrey)  
For book prices visit [www.randomhouse.com/delrey](http://www.randomhouse.com/delrey)

BABYLON 5 TM & © 1998 Warner Bros.

# MICHAEL WHELAN



Image Size: 19" x 23"

Edition: 550, SIN

## "LANDING"

An Original Limited  
Edition Lithograph

Master science fiction artist Michael Whelan has won 11 Hugo Awards for Best Fantasy/Science Fiction Artist, along with the Super Hugo for Best Professional Artist in the past 30 years.

In 1995 Michael was commissioned by the Fantasy 500 Collectors Consortium to create "Landing," an original lithograph, as part of their *Passage to Sanctuary* Series.

This beautiful image was created by Michael using a combination of traditional and digital techniques to create the final digital "painting." The image was then transferred directly to the lithographic printing process. The digital original was destroyed when printing was complete, so that the image only exists on these limited edition prints. Only 553 lithograph sets were created, and many of them have already been purchased by collectors. Only a very few remain.

Sovereign Collections has acquired 33 of the remaining lithographs, and is offering these prints at a reduced price to the discriminating collector.

Created on 100% cotton archival paper, utilizing up to twenty colors of special light-fast inks, each lithograph is signed and numbered by Michael Whelan.

For a limited time these prints are being offered at the substantially reduced price of \$195, including shipping and handling.

To order, telephone toll free:

1-800-516-9229

VISA and MasterCard accepted. To order by mail, send your check, money order or credit card number (please include expiration date and signature) to the address below.

**Sovereign Collections**

11305 Sunset Hills Road, Reston, VA 20190

tion out would be a real trick, though!

**BENFORD:** Another sort of "teleportation" is quantum mechanical tunneling. It normally doesn't work very well for macroscopic objects. I've lately been wondering if one could make teleportation of a limited sort work by putting all the atoms of a system into a coherent quantum state; that is, cohere certain momentum states, say. This should increase the tunneling probability for the "pure" (coherent) state to pass through a wall. The reason we big macroscopic objects can't tunnel, the way alpha particles can escape a nucleus (i.e., make it radioactive), is that we are assortments of many incoherent states, I believe. Does this make sense to you?

**BENFORD:** The catbox problem can be made infinitesimal for walking through walls, since the other side of the wall is only centimeters away. Then you're limited by computing speed.

**CRAMER:** It's not the distance that matters, it's the isolation from all interactions.

**BENFORD:** In fact, am I right about coherent states tunneling with high probability?

**CRAMER:** At a guess, tunneling is not any more probable, but if the atoms do tunnel, they all do it together. Also, I'd guess such coherence is not compatible with life, so walking through walls might be an amusement of short duration.

**BENFORD:** John, walking through walls incoherently would leave plenty of your body behind unless you were quantum-coherent—a messy death. So coherence is crucial. But why would coherence be fatal? It need only last a microsecond, though I'd like to know why it's deadly in general.

**CRAMER:** "Coherence" in the sense of matching quantum phases doesn't have any meaning unless the elements are all at the same frequency, as in the case of very cold atoms or photons from the same laser. A "coherent" human being would rapidly become incoherent—and silent.

**LANDIS:** Well, you might have to freeze them first.

**CRAMER:** You'd also have to make a human being out of just one kind of atom, which is presently an unsolved problem. One point in quantum teleportation is that while the original quantum state—the "teleported"—may be destroyed, there are schemes for "cloning" the entangled states so that the information could be sent to several receivers. Thus, one might imagine identical astronauts arriving at several star systems at the same time. NASA might view this as a way of saving on training costs.

**LANDIS:** How would you clone the entangled state? I thought that a feature of quantum information was that it was destroyed if you try to copy it. Do you clone it by duplicating the photon using an excited medium and stimulated emission?

**CRAMER:** The current favorite method of producing entangled states is with laser down-converting, in which a blue photon is made into two red photons. This can be done

more than once, and with each down-conversion the entangled state is "twinned."

**LANDIS:** I think it's too early to get excited about quantum teleportation—scientists may have "teleported" a photon, but it's a long way before we can teleport humans! It may be possible in principle, but there are some killer technology difficulties. The amount of information it would take to transmit a human being is staggering. You need to send the quantum state of something like ten to the 27 particles. At a microwave frequency of a hundred gigahertz, for example, at the maximum bandwidth it would take something like ten to the 16 seconds to send the information in a human. That's half a billion years! How would you scan in the information? Would you have to destroy the original human with a gamma-ray laser? How long would it take?

**CRAMER:** I don't want to argue with your logic, but you should remember that Bennett and coworkers showed that the actual information flow is along the "hidden" quantum channel, through nonlocality, and that the physical message transmitting the results of measurements is like the public encryption key that is needed to break the code. That, in principle, could be much shorter than 10<sup>27</sup> bits.

**BENFORD:** Also, there is the issue of the essential information needed to make up the system. Teleporting myself, I don't think I'd need the full position and momentum of every atom, but rather more coarse-grained info, to feel that it's "me" that's getting moved.

**LANDIS:** Looking more carefully at the paper by Bennett et al., they say: "reliable teleportation of an N-state particle requires a classical channel of  $2 \log_2(N)$  bits capacity."

**CRAMER:** An N state particle is the same as an N state system of particles. So let's see ...  $2 \log_2(1027) = 180$ , so the code key for a ten-to-the-twenty-seven element system would be the information from only 180 measurements. That's surprisingly low!

**CRAMER:** Teleportation is a familiar idea in SF. It permeated the SF literature of the Golden Age, providing the basis for SF classics like Van Vogt's *World of Null-A* (1945), Budrys' *Regan Moon* (1960), and many others. Van Vogt hypothesized that if you make two systems identical to something like "60 decimal places" (whatever that means) they become the same system, even if spatially separated, and you can jump across space from one to another. Van Vogt's protagonist had a "double brain" that could memorize a pattern of atoms to 80 decimal places and reproduce it elsewhere, allowing him to teleport. That's a bit like two entangled quantum systems, I guess, but not at all the same. I don't recall how Budrys' scheme worked, except that it did not destroy the initial teleports, but rather created his clone in some other place—the Moon. It was asserted that because original and clone were identical, they were telepathically linked. I guess that might be considered as "entangled states," but not the kind described by quantum mechanics. The modern scheme is perhaps an example of how science always has the capability of "out-boggling" science fiction by coming up with

# THE COMIC BOOK RENAISSANCE HAS ARRIVED!

SCI-FI,  
ACTION,  
HORROR,  
FANTASY

FROM  
BARRY BLAIR  
COLIN CHAN  
DAVID HERNANDEZ  
ROB PRIOR  
WALDEN WONG



THESE GREAT TITLES NOW AVAILABLE!

LOST HEROES

DARK ISLAND

LEGEND OF THE  
ELFLORD

THE GOTHIC SCROLLS

COPYRIGHT © 1998 DAYDEZ ARTS, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

In NM 505.438.4849

Toll Free 888.467.0006



## Spirit Village

€

replicas

[www.spiritvillage.com](http://www.spiritvillage.com)

where the bizarre blends seamlessly

ordinary. Our Sci-Fi cyber-series

"The Building of Breia," invites you into a magical world that is continually developing. Purchase ready-to-hang framed prints, amulets, jewelry, and one-of-a-kind items seen and heard during the plot twists of the Breia chronicle.

[www.spiritvillage.com](http://www.spiritvillage.com)

CONTEST!

Visit our website for details.

ideas that SF writers never dreamed of.

**LANDIS:** How will the "new" ideas of teleportation affect future science fiction?

**BENFORD:** This "new" teleportation is so complex, I think it would best enter into Hard SF, where John's schemes for going to Alpha Centauri would frame the constraint necessary for interesting plots. I remember James Patrick Kelly's "Think Like A Dinosaur," in which teleportation equals death at the transmitter end, and thought it realistic, maybe because it agrees with my own fears. The protagonist was terrified when she found that she was about to be vaporized so a copy could see the stars. Notice how long this story took to get written: decades after the issue was clear.

**CRAMER:** SF writers can always ignore physics that don't meet their plot needs, and certainly some future SF will ignore the ideas of quantum teleportation. Actual use of it will require some interesting extrapolations. There are some massive problems in the way of implementing Bennett & Co.'s teleportation scheme: (a) producing an entangled system of  $N$  atoms that is close enough to the object or person to be teleported to be converted into it in a few operations (180?); (b) storing the entangled subsystems in sufficient isolation that they have no interactions with the external world; (c) having a way of mixing the teleported with the entangled "blank" and performing measurements on the mixed system; and (d) transmitting the measurement information and performing the requisite operations at the other end. The SF novels I've written have been crafted to stay pretty close to what we can presently do in physics. The above items are demanding enough that I would have problems describing them in a novel. But other SF writers have done things that I would never dare, and they may be able to do so in this case.

**BENFORD:** I'd place teleportation as less probable than faster-than-light travel, even given the quantum correlation arguments, because I can't see the technology working. On the other hand, if we find a convenient wormhole nearby, left over from the Big Bang, we could use it for effective faster-than-light travel. Or if we manufacture a window into a fresh new universe, as in my novel *Cosmos*, that will also give us travel to interesting far places.

**CRAMER:** I think that, for a while, at least, the principal uses of quantum teleportation will be to gain headlines for a few experiments on individual photons and particles in the science press, and give added verisimilitude to Hard SF stories that use teleportation as a plot element. Actual teleportation is a long way off, because of the horrendous problems of moving the concept from individual particles to large systems of particles.

Nevertheless, it's a fun idea, and I look forward to progress in this area, both in the SF literature and in the physics laboratories.

**BENFORD:** You still won't get me into a disintegrator-teleporter! ☐

## NEW FROM REVELL-MONOGRAM

### BABYLON MODEL KITS

Build them yourself:

Highly detailed replicas from the hit TV series!

Available at hobby shops and where model kits are sold.



VISIT OUR WEB SITE

[www.revell-monogram.com](http://www.revell-monogram.com)

BABYLON'S NAMES, CHARACTERS, AND ALL RELATED INFO ARE TRADEMARKS OF PAPERBROG © 1998





**NA**

# BERNICE SUMMERFIELD: ARCHEOLOGIST, ADVENTURER, BARFLY

The Drell Innulate was a fabulous and unique religious idol.  
Precious enough to kill for.

## *TEMPEST*

ISBN 0 426 20523 5

She has just one week to prevent a catastrophe  
that could mean she will never be born.

## *WALKING TO BABYLON*

ISBN 0 426 20521 9

The timelines have been cut loose – alternative pasts, presents  
and futures slicing through the world we think of as real.

## *OBLIVION*

ISBN 0 426 20522 7

The experimental spaceship *Medusa* has finally been rediscovered –  
but the ghosts of its old crew don't want visitors.

## *THE MEDUSA EFFECT*

ISBN 0 426 20524 3

The Saraani are a race that hold the key to immortality – and a  
ruthless dictator is determined to exploit them.

## *DRY PILGRIMAGE*

ISBN 0 426 20525 1

The dark secret of the Knights Templar is a fabled device with  
the power to destroy and create civilizations.

## *THE SWORD OF FOREVER*

ISBN 0 426 20526 X



T H E N E W  
A D V E N T U R E S

Twenty-Sixth-Century Fiction – available from all good booksellers  
Alternatively call this order number: 1-800-805-1083

LONDON BRIDGE

Distributed in America by London Bridge



# WAP FUTURE

A billion years from now, with our sun near death,  
all the creatures of Earth will wonder,  
“Whatever became of the humans?”

**O**ne billion years from now the sun as seen from Earth is a great swollen dome fulminating with gout and geysers of flaming ejecta. The world turns slowly; the sun rises on a day that will extend itself for what in our time would be a year.

On the edge of the vast continental landmass, blue grass slopes down to a wide and placid ocean. Along the fore-shore, towering golden columns dominate the rolling landscape, the oracles that from time to time recount events from the immeasurable history of planet Earth.

With the passing of the long night, small creatures are awakening all along the length of the littoral. Alerted by the increasing heat, they emerge from burrows, snouts twitching, half-useless eyes

blinking at the brightening world. These animals resemble rodents, though only remotely, with their silvered armature and multiple legs. They are not sentient, though the golden columns tell of a time when their far, far distant ancestors were, and ruled the world.

They scuttle from their subterranean night-warrens and scout the shore for food. Other life-forms are abroad and roving the long coast: crab-like creatures of striking scarlet shells, which tip-toe with fastidious, mincing gaits amongst the scurrying silver rodents; transparent worms which ooze with sickly peevish pulses through the blue grass, their innards flashing a complex code of colors which form the rudiments of their language, and which over the next million years will become the basis of their evolution to sentient and civilized beings.

BY ERIC BROWN

*Illustration by John Berkey*

And what of the other intelligent races, the species which across the aeons have struggled up the evolutionary ladder to gain brief and glorious ascendancy? Before the present holders of the title — the beings who disdain nomenclature and cannot therefore be named — before them were the Kallidai, spider-analogues and warriors; and before them the Oshana, cetaceans who left the oceans of Earth two million years ago in a spectacular armada to the stars; and before them...? But the list is almost endless, and meaningless to you: the dominant life-forms of Earth have been many and various, and shared only two things in common, other than the fact of their sentience. One was their belief that they were the greatest of the intelligences to grace the planet, and the other was that they all in time devolved or became extinct.

Among the many prime species, the golden columns tell of great and surpassing achievements in every mode of endeavor; every race has discovered scientific truths, and created art and music, and devised philosophies with which to analyze existence: many, in fact, have discovered what has been discovered before but become lost and forgotten over the aeons.

Of humanity, the golden columns say little: bipedal upright sentients, they report; bisexual mammals. Legend has it that they were the first intelligent species to emerge on Earth, but the truth is a frail concern after a billion years have intervened.

And what became of humanity? Again, the golden columns are vague: there is rumor that they departed their homeworld in vast ships bound for the stars, but if so no trace has ever been discovered of their descendants among the many inhabited worlds in the vast out-there; another, that they perished in a global armageddon, or devolved and returned to the sea.

So much for Homo sapiens.

THE RACE WHICH CONCERNS US NOW IS THAT WITHOUT A NAME, and the individual whose fate we will follow is almost upon the stage. It, likewise, has no name, though its fellow beings identify it by a long and complex code of pheromones.

The creatures appear on the inland horizon, an orderly column of perhaps twenty individuals. For convenience we will call them Thinkers, as that is their principal activity during the long days and nights of this future Earth. The last creature in the caravan is shorter than the rest, its four triple-jointed legs not unlike bamboo canes, its silver dome resembling an umbrella. It observes the world with two optics on short stalks which rise from its braincase — when, that is, it contemplates the world at all. It, like all its fellows, only notionally inhabits this reality. It is more concerned with the realm of the spirit.

The Thinkers have been walking throughout the night — that is, for the duration of one of our years — and now they are almost at journey's end. Their destination is the echelon of golden columns that dominates the foreshore. Every tenth, a period approximating one hundred days, the Thinkers migrate from their northern breeding grounds to the plane of the golden columns. They remain beside the columns just one long day, quizzing the towering oracles, calling up arcane facts of history, correlating the philosophies of other races with the tenets of their own creed.

The long trek is almost over and the last Thinker in the column is overjoyed. It is its first migration to the columns, and the sight of them in the distance, glowing in the light of the newly-risen sun, is all its litter-father ever promised. Its thirst for knowledge will soon be slaked. It has a hundred, a thousand, questions to be answered.

Its thin legs buckle in ecstasy at the thought. It staggers, losing its footing in the sand of the plateau above the plain of blue grass. It falls to its first set of knees, and then to its second, and then sprawls dome-first — and disaster strikes.

A narrow fissure splits the land nearby. The Young Thinker rolls across the sand and slips neatly into the fissure. It falls a little way, until wedged firmly in the narrowing width of the chasm.

It cannot move. Its legs are pinned by its braincase, one limb throbbing painfully as if broken. It attempts to claw at the side of the fissure with its undamaged legs, but can gain no purchase of the friable sand. It ceases its efforts in this direction and sends forth a chain of simple pheromones, the equivalent of help! or SOS. It pauses, waits, but picks up no responding burst that would tell it help is on the way. Perhaps, already, the column of its fellow pilgrims has passed beyond hailing distance.

In time, as the sun rises and angles into the fissure, the Young Thinker's exposed and unprotected underside will bake in the heat.

It knows this, knows that it will never commune with the golden columns, and experiences sadness.

We will leave the Young Thinker in this predicament, on the cusp of life and death, and consider for a while.

**Its thin legs buckle in ecstasy**

**at the thought. It staggers,**

**losing its footing in the**

**sand of the plateau**

**above the plain**

**of blue grass.**

**It falls  
to its**

**first set**

**of knees,**

**and then to its**

**second, and then**

**sprawls dome-first**

**—and disaster strikes.**

THIS MUCH IS FACT: I AM MALE, IN MY MID-thirties, and live on an island called Britain in the last decade of the twentieth century, countless centuries before the future I am describing.

Like the majority of humans on the planet, I spend a lot of time mired in dissatisfaction and regret. I

love someone who does not love me. People close to me have died of cancer. I will be dead in forty or fifty years, if not before, and though I know this I cannot wholly accept the fact. When I was in Greece some years ago a fair, sad girl said to me: "The most terrible thing about being alive is knowing that I will die." — and killed herself two weeks later.

I have found no creeds or philosophies in which to invest my faith. I believe in nothing, especially that which is professed to be the truth. There are no absolutes. Einstein said: "We do not know one millionth of one per cent of anything."

I spend much of my life considering a time which is not now, perhaps in an attempt to escape the exigencies of the present. It would be amazing if my dreams of the future turned out to be true, but if they do not come to pass then perhaps other futures — bizarre beyond the grasp of my imagination — might exist instead.

ONE BILLION YEARS INTO THE DEEP FUTURE OF MY invention, the Young Thinker awaits the resolution of its fate.

It wishes to rejoin its fellows, and complete its pilgrimage, and commune with the golden columns. It could accept the high probability that it will not survive, could spend its final hours in ritual meditation, but it is still an

infant, with a long time yet to live, and there is still so much to learn.

One eye-stalk is pinned between the dome of its braincase and the wall of the fissure, and so cannot be manoeuvred. But the other is free and can be swivelled to take in the surrounding prison of sand and rock. The Young Thinker observes that the fissure widens as it progresses in the direction of the ocean. If it could by some means move itself, roll towards where the fissure is wide enough to allow it to right itself, then its silver dome would protect it from the heat of the sun. It would survive. If, beyond the range of its vision, the fissure widened even further, it might be possible to walk to the sea and rejoin its companions.

Its legs are splayed wide in four directions, pinned painfully by the circumference of its braincase. With difficulty it tests its legs one



Listen while commuting and  
shift your drive into hyperdrive!

## QUOTES & NOTES

"The State had use for an empty man." - Remmer  
"Killer peeks riding timestreams, biting the heads off  
vast chickens of probability." - Under Siege  
"Ross claimed to know where the Seven Cities of  
Gold were. Right." - Cibolet  
"The crew can't strike against emiggrants! This is an  
illegal operation." - Hollywood Kremlin  
"The church would allow a crew to travel in its own  
line without time dilation." - The Shobies' Story  
"It's like a boardgame run by machines." - Slow Birds  
"All of people are on their own, infected with  
visions that are virtually unique." - Blood Sisters  
"Don't fool yourself! - this rescue mission was a  
political job from the start!" - A Walk in the Sun  
The planet Mercury was supposed to be boring, but  
investigative teams reported anomalies-Cities of Gold  
The near-immortals created complicit humans  
from themselves to explore space.- Gustaf of Honor  
Mike Resnick's Korymbos series is the most honored  
story cycle in the history of the science fiction field!!

### ORDERING INFORMATION

Mail to:  
AudioText, Inc.  
PO Box 682791  
Houston, TX 77269-0791  
Include your name, address, phone number, along with the titles  
you want to order, and a check or money order payable to  
AudioText. Add \$4 s/h within US & Canada and \$15 elsewhere.  
TX residents add 8.25% sales tax. Although not necessary,  
order forms may be printed from website (www.flash.net/atx).  
E-mail us at [atx@flash.net](mailto:atx@flash.net) with your comments or questions.

## FREE

### Bonus Title

Order 5 titles then choose an  
additional title you'd like to receive free!

### SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

- 1) Discounted price from email
- 2) Single cassette titles \$7.00/cassette electronic titles \$10.00
- 3) One time ordering fee (\$4.00) payable with the first issue
- 4) Texas residents must add 8.25% for sales tax
- 5) Titles are shipped about once a month
- 6) Keep only those titles you like - you have 15 days to return  
those you do not wish to keep
- 7) After paying for your first title in advance, to alert your  
subscription, all other titles are paid for after you receive them -  
no advance payments. Make checks and money orders payable  
to AudioText, Inc.
- 8) Get your subscription started by sending:  
a) \$11.00 if you're not a Texas resident  
b) \$12.00 if you're a Texas resident  
to: AudioText, PO Box 682791, Houston, TX 77269-0791
- 9) Subscriptions only available to US & Canadian residents

# GREAT SCIENCE FICTION STORIES ON AUDIO CASSETTES an "in-your-ear" experience

"Fine fare for sci-fi fans." -Booklist  
"Tantalize your ears..."

-Science Fiction Age  
"...well-produced selection." -Locus  
"...top-notch work..." -sfsite.com  
"...highly recommended." -Tangent



"If you subscribe to the theory of  
general relativity you should also  
subscribe to GREAT SCIENCE  
FICTION STORIES." -A. E. Fine

ALIENS  
STARSHIPS  
TIME TRAVELS  
CYBERPUNKS  
ALIEN WORLDS  
ALTERNATE UNIVERSES  
"HARD" SCIENCE FICTION



HUGO AWARD WINNERS  
NEBULA AWARD WINNERS

# INFINIVOX

1-800-860-3910  
[www.flash.net/~atx](http://www.flash.net/~atx)



Remmer  
Larry Niven  
1664612299 \$10.99



Korymbos (Hugo winner)  
One Perfect Morning,  
with Jackals  
(Tales of Korymbos #1)  
Mike Resnick  
1664612237 \$10.99



Under Siege  
George R. R. Martin  
1664612245 \$11.99



For I Have Touched the Sky  
(Tales of Korymbos #2)  
Mike Resnick  
1664612253 \$11.99



Cities of Gold  
Shobies' Story  
1664612121 \$10.99



A Walk in the Sun  
(Hugo winner)  
Gustaf of Honor  
166461213X \$10.99



Blood Sisters  
Greg Egan  
1664612148 \$10.99



Cibolet  
Connie Willis  
1664612156 \$10.99



Cities of Gold  
Shobies' Story  
1664612121 \$10.99



The Shobies' Story  
Gustaf of Honor  
166461213X \$10.99



Slow Birds  
Lisa Watson  
1664612105 \$10.99



Hollywood Kremlin  
Bruce Sterling  
1664612113 \$10.99

Each title above is on a single audio cassette, 50-90 minutes in length, unabridged and lightly accented with music and sound effects. More details available at website ([www.flash.net/~atx](http://www.flash.net/~atx)) or call customer service (800-860-3910).

by one. Its fourth limb is useless, certainly broken, but the remaining three are in working order. It stretches the last segment of each leg and effects to move its braincase ever so slightly back and forth, the aim being to wear away the pressing wall of sand on either side.

At first there is no give at all, but the Young Thinker persists, bracing its three good legs and pushing first this way, and then that — and in time it feels itself move ever so slightly. It pushes again, feels itself roll a fraction towards the sea. It re-positions its legs and repeats the process, and like this, little by little, the Young Thinker moves further along the fissure.

At one point, as the gap widens, it takes the strain on its three good legs lest it falls further into the fissure and so wedge itself fast again. Soon it is crawling along on its side, braincase scraping the wall while its legs move one over the other in a careful choreography of survival. It allows itself to consider once again the immediate future, the golden columns and the many truths there to be learned.

Ahead, it observes that the fissure becomes a wide chasm with a flattened valley bottom. Soon, it tells itself, it will be able to walk upright, once again protected from the sun by its silver braincase. It re-adjusts its legs, placing one on one side of the fissure and two others on the wall opposite. Like this, very carefully, it rights itself and moves towards the valley bottom. The relief on its underparts is immediate; it can feel its braincase absorbing the heat of the sun.

With almost careless abandon its skips, three-legged, the rest of the way into the valley bottom, considering what it will tell its companions when reunited. The adventures to relate. The experience of its fall, imprisonment, and eventual escape!

It checks its rapture and looks about itself, and then experiences a diminution of its joy, in fact a sinking sense of despair. The fissure might have widened out, but it widens no more. The Young Thinker is surrounded by near vertical walls of sand and sedimentary rock. It makes a few perfunctory and pathetic attempts to scale the incline, but in vain.

It stands on three legs, its fourth dangling uselessly. At least, now, the heat of the sun is no longer a threat, though without food and water the Young Thinker will in time perish: that much is an inevitability.

It lowers itself to the ground, tucking its legs beneath the silver hemisphere of its braincase, arranges itself comfortably and begins a meditation that will last until it dies.

It withdraws from the here and now, this illusion of reality, and accesses a higher plane. It considers abstruse concepts way beyond the ken of you or me, ontological conundrums concerning all that has ever been or ever will be. The Young Thinker might stand only one metre high, and resemble some errant ocean crustacean, but despite its youth it has the intellectual capacity of a genius of our time, and an understanding of the universe far in excess of any later-day Zen master.

Hours pass.

**T**HE YOUNG THINKER IS SQUATTING LIKE A DISCARDED hubcap, recoiled to its death and ultimate transcendence, when a rude communication from the outside world makes itself known. It picks up a startled pheromonal cry of delight. In less than a second it recognizes the sender's scent, and experiences a surge of joy at the resumption of possibilities promised by the arrival of its year-mate.

The Young Thinker returns to the real world, replies in kind with a description of its health and whereabouts, and seconds later observes the waving eye-stalks of its mate peering over the side of the fissure.

A rapid dialogue ensues, the essence of which is that the Young Thinker's mate will now effect its rescue. The mate leans over the side of the fissure, reaching down with two long limbs. The Young Thinker scrambles to the wall, reaching up one limb while balancing on the remaining two, its broken leg hanging redundant.

To its joy, it touches the legs of its mate, grips hold and waits. Its mate takes the strain, attempts to pull it from the fissure.

The Young Thinker moves its two standing legs closer to the sandy wall, and then attempts to climb up the vertical face. In an instant a change in circumstance is affected — the mate teeters precariously on the high lip of the fissure, and then tips over.

The Young Thinker ducks to avoid being struck.

Its mate hits the ground, legs tucked up for protection. It rolls around on the rim of its braincase in ever decreasing circles, and at last topples like a coin.

Five seconds pass, and then the mate pushes itself to its full height and, in a show of silent indignation, one by one shakes out its four limbs.

They regard each other during an interim of profound pheromonal cessation.

At last they communicate, discuss the likelihood of being found by their fellows, which the mate considers unlikely. The mate did not discover the Young Thinker's absence until the pilgrims had reached the shore, by which time they were absorbed in communion with the golden columns. Alone the mate set out to find the errant Thinker. In its opinion, the others will be too rapt in communication with the golden oracles to notice their absence.

They must reconcile themselves to the very real possibility of death.

They fold their legs and sit side by side, sending forth pheromonal signals to anything that might be passing.

#### IT IS THE YOUNG THINKER WHO NOTICES THE FLYER.

The aerial being replies to the distress calls with a strange pheromone code. The Young Thinker turns an eye-stalk and beholds a creature all vast silver-wing and great beaked head. The Flyer descends, flies parallel with the fissure down which the Young Thinker travelled, and lands in the valley bottom beside the Young Thinker and its mate.

The Young Thinker is a-quiver with excitement. Why, but Flyers are fabled beings, travellers between the stars, communicators of all that is known of the out-there. What can be its errand in this sequestered location?

The Young Thinker's mate is upright too, now, eye-stalks straining towards the great mythical beast.

The Flyer, in a hard-to-translate burst of pheromones, enquires as to whether they represent the now dominant life-form on planet Earth — it has been away for so long, has seen much.

The Young Thinker responds in the affirmative, sensing that the Flyer has momentous news which to impart.

Its mate informs the Flyer of their predicament, and the wise Flyer replies in a burst of what might be mercurial that it will take them in its claws.

And no sooner has the Young Thinker grasped the fact of their salvation, than they are grabbed and airborne, hoisted skyward in a vertiginous dizzying rush. The Young Thinker releases a wild stream of excited pheromonal delight and watches the land stream by below. The fissure vanishes, and then the sandy plateau, to be replaced by the littoral of blue grass — and there, directly below, is the first of the many golden columns! Oh, joy rises in the Young Thinker, and he communicates this emotion to the Flyer, who responds with indulgent and forbearing pheromonal humor.

The Young Thinker scans the plane, soon locates its fellow pilgrims, all squatting now like so many mushrooms around the tall, gleaming tower of a golden column.

Strange visions play upon the face of the column, images of a far distant past, moving pictures of beings and beasts long gone.

The Flyer once remonstrously dumps the Young Thinker and its mate down beside their fellow pilgrims. The Young Thinker rights itself, its only thought to communicate to its fellows the story of its fall, vicissitudes, and eventual rescue — but the others are watching the Flyer now, and the Thinker recalls its impression that the Flyer had news to impart, and it is suddenly excited with the thought of what this news might be.

The Flyer has lighted upon the summit of the golden column, and

*Continued on page 88*

BY KRISTINE KATHRYN RUSCH

# cool hunting

Steffie  
made her mark  
chasing cool.  
Yet it  
wasn't until  
she stopped  
running that  
she made the  
coolest  
discovery  
of them all.

FIFTEEN DIFFERENT WAYS TO FASTEN A SHOE AND she was sitting on the porch steps of a refurbished brownstone, watching a boy barely old enough to shave tie knots in an ancient pair of Air Jordans. Steffie pushed her hair out of her face, opened her palmtop and used the tiny lens in the corner to shoot the boy's hands. They were long, slender, unlined, with wide knuckles and trimmed nails. A person couldn't do what he was doing with short stubby fingers or InstaGrow™ nails that curved like talons.

He took all six multicolored laces, wrapped them around three fingers, and created bows of differing sizes. Then he tied them at the tongue, and created a flower that blossomed from the ancient shoe like a rose in the middle of rubble.

When he was done, she flipped him a plastic. He caught it between his thumb and forefinger, glanced at it, and raised his eyebrows.

"Mega," he said.

She was glad he thought so. She only paid him half the going rate for a style that would be all over the streets in the next two hours, then all over the stores in the next two weeks.

"Thanks," she said, and slipped her palmtop back in her pocket. Then she grabbed one of his extra laces, tied her brown hair back, and headed down the gum-covered sidewalk toward the park. Shoelaces. Who'd have thought? When shoes could zip, velcro, and seal themselves, who'd've thought the saboteurs of cool would go back to the lace?

Hens was not to ask why. Hens was to record, market, and change. Coolhunting was still a strange profession, but 30 years after the first coolhunters hit the streets, it had worked its way into a main science. A science only a person with an eye for beauty and a sense of people could spot.

She resisted the urge to open her palmtop and check her own credit account. She'd sent the vid to seven lace companies, two shoe manufacturers, and one hundred resale outlets. Each of them should have sent a fee into her current account. It should have doubled with the laces too. If she hit her quota today, she'd have enough for a two-week flop. Lord knew she needed it. Her own boots were worn thin from all the walking. Twenty-one successful hunts in seven days, not to mention eight busts, and one illegal.

She still held the record for the most shifts in one day. Steffie Storm-Warring, they called her, because in her wake was turmoil and destruction. Entire companies folded on the basis of her vids. Entire companies replaced them. And credits flowed back and forth like a river covered in Mediterranean sludge.

No one knew who she was. She had 40 different legal identities, and more than enough credits stashed in various accounts to live expensively for the rest of her life. But she liked coolhunting. It was purposely anonymous—if people knew who she was they would chase her, try to convince her they were cool—and it carried no responsibility. She didn't answer to a boss, she didn't answer to a company, she didn't even answer to the people she sold her vids to. She was as independent as independent got, a loner in every sense of the word.

And she liked it like that. On the corner a hot dog vendor floated his cart over a hot-air grate. The dogs weren't like the ones she'd had as a kid. These were all meat, registered and certified lean cuts from prime portions of pig. The taste was similar but not the same.

A taste gone from her life. Everything changed. Nothing remained the same. Life on the street had taught her that. Coolhunting had reinforced it.

She took an unmarked plastic from her pocket, checked the credit level, and decided to launder it through the vendor. She stopped, ordered two dogs slathered in mustard, sweet capsaicin, and pickle relish, and handed the man the plastic.

He was skinny, unshaven, with an apron that had grime on it as old as she was. Vendors had always looked like that. Even in the ancient black-and-white vids available for free download on any TV set, the vendors looked like that.

A hundred years hadn't changed them. Just their carts and their product.

He took her plastic, ran it through his machine, then frowned. "That's a lot of change," he said.

"Just run it through the machine." She took one dog off his counter-top and took a bite. A little too juicy, a little too ham-flavored, but enough to still an appetite that had been building for the good part of a day.

"Don't do that anymore," he said. Anyone caught recharging too much plastic, running too many credits, was brought in.

"Sure you do, for an extra five," she said around the dog.

He grunted, then slammed the plastic into his machine. No one said no to an extra five, and she could afford it. She could afford anything if

she were willing to spend credits instead of accumulate them. Somehow, knowing how fast tastes changed made her unwilling to commit to her own.

She ate the rest of the dog, nearly swallowing the last piece whole. Maybe it had been two days since she'd eaten. Maybe only a few hours. She couldn't remember. She'd been hunting.

It always took all of her energy. As she picked up the second dog, he handed the plastic back to her. "I won't do it again," he said.

"Your loss." She sprayed a bit of bun at him, and automatically covered her mouth with her left hand. "Sorry."

He shrugged, turned away. A lot of basically honest people did that when she asked them to violate their own rules. Made her ashamed sometimes. Made her realize how different her world was from theirs.

She had the luxury of eating the second dog more slowly, then cleaning her mustard-covered hands and face in the stand's laser wipe. She grabbed a napkin and wiped for good measure. Public cleaners always left her feeling a bit gritty.

"Good dogs?" She hadn't seen the guy approach. She glanced up as he spoke, registered him as someone she'd seen before, and a shudder ran down her back. He wasn't young like most of her subjects, but then her early subjects weren't young anymore either. Still, his clear gray eyes slanting in a coffee-colored Slavic-feature face looked familiar.

The wrong kind of familiar. She shrugged, kept it light. "Dogs are as good as any these days." "You ever had the old ones?" He brushed a hand over his silver suit.

Three weeks old, worn Detroit style, with a red cummerbund instead of a tie and pierce chain. "The ones they made of sawdust and plug's feet?"

"That's not how they made 'em," she said and stepped away from him.

For a minute, she thought he'd keep up, but he didn't. He stayed at the stand, bought himself a dog, and watched her walk away.

Maybe that was how her subjects felt when she watched them. As if they were suddenly on public display, as if their entire selves were being exposed to the world.

Watchers shouldn't be watched. She rounded a corner, then slipped into the park.

The air was fresher here, the trees budding. Tulips bloomed in special garden circles maintained by a crew of city employees who were determined to make Central Park look as cultivated as possible. She liked to spend spring here. It made her feel alive.

It also allowed her to watch the cools bloom.

She went to her bench. It was newly painted—green this time—40 give the illusion of newness despite its great age. Around her, couples threw balls for their dogs, and kids went by in groups, deep in conversation.

She watched: Clothes. Shoes. Jewelry.

Always alert for a new combination, a new look. But it wasn't as easy as all that. The look was a sense, a third eye, a way of seeing that most people didn't have.

She wasn't looking so much for the new trend as she was for the person who would set that trend.

Back when coolhunting started in the hype-filled '90s, the coolhunter's goal was to find the cool kid, the one who would be the innovator, the one all the other kids wanted to copy. But what the early coolhunters never realized was that cool itself was a transient state. A cool kid one week would be passé the next.

Cool was easy to spot. Pre-cool was hard.

ou that KD is dying." "They told me  
"They told me to tell you that K



And she had the hardest job of all. She was in New York, not Phoenix or Dallas or Santa Fe, those hotbeds of the newest trends. Here she had to work harder because everyone knew that fashion moved north and east. It started in the Southwest and traveled, slowly through the south, up the middle, then over to the Eastern Seaboard.

Coolfighting in New York was like deep-sea diving in the Arctic: Not recommended.

Which made it all the more challenging.

Which meant it was for her.

She settled on the iron bench. It was a bit cold to be sitting still, but she had two dogs to settle and that encounter to put in place. Strangers rarely spoke to her. She put up an invisible barrier. If she was noticed it was in passing. If she wasn't, even better.

Casual people didn't speak to her on the street.

This guy knew her.

And if he knew her, he'd be here, sometime soon.

In the meantime, she'd hunt.

THE NICE THING ABOUT NEW YORK IN THE SPRING WAS THAT everyone came to her. After the winter cooped up in high-heats flats, ThermalTemp All-Weather Gear™, and Footsnuggler Boots™, the city's residents wanted to strut their stuff. Cool happened fast here in the spring; trends among the setters ran hourly. The early adapters spent only days in the new styles before moving on to something else. Even the herd, the followers, spent only a few weeks in the style before changing, and the laggards never caught the spring rush.

Last spring, she'd cleared 30 million credits in one month.

This spring, she hoped to do better.

She leaned back on the bench, feeling its chill permeate her '01 vintage sweater. Her stomach churned restlessly, disturbed by too much food and that stranger's face.

Teenagers walked in front of her, laughing, the girls with their hair short and spiky, the boys with theirs down to their knees. Two-year-old fashions: These were laggards who didn't really care about their position. They were not the architects of cool that she wanted.

Sometimes, though, sometimes she envied them their easy walk, their uncausing laughter. Her life had become so focused on trends and styles, on the way that clothing—appearance—reflected thought, that she wondered if she ever made decisions all on her own anymore. She wouldn't think of wearing spiky hair, nor would she walk in a crowd, laughing.

She missed the laughter.

Coolhunting made close companionship impossible. Friendships difficult. More and more lately she'd been thinking of retiring, of finding an apartment in the city and actually having contact with people.

Making friends.

Establishing ties.

A boy, no more than 10, air-shoed past, running six inches off the ground. His shoes, early models, formed a cushion of air that was as dangerous as it was once thought safe. The air cushion acted like a super high platform. One false step and the wearer would fall.

To run in air-shoes required guts and a certain amount of I-don't-care.

She almost got up and followed him. Almost.

His spirit was unique, but she saw nothing that could be duplicated. Nothing that she could vid and sell. Air-shoes had been on the market since the 'teens, and had had their moment six months ago when the nets declared them unsafe.

Still, she had never seen anyone run in them before.

"I've thought you'd have followed him." The man from the hot dog stand sat next to her. He smelled faintly of spicy cologne, and he had a

touch of mustard on the corner of his mouth. It made him seem more real, somehow.

"Why would I follow him?" she asked, then wished she hadn't. She knew better than to engage.

"I'd've picked him," the man said, "if I were coolhunting."

"Which you're not," she said.

"Who says?" He touched the shoelace in her hair.

She stood. "I do."

Her hands were shaking. She shoved them in the pocket of her tweed pants, then headed down the asphalt walk. He hurried behind her, his feet scuffling. She could smell him before he reached her.

That cologne was beginning to annoy.

"You know," he said softly, his torso brushing hers, his legs keeping pace with her legs, "there's a 10 million credit reward for anyone who identifies you."

"Ten million?" she asked, a bit startled at the amount. Last she had heard it was two million. "That low?"

He laughed, not fooled. "You're hot, girl, and some cools want to find you."

He spoke softly as he walked with her, his words like a caress in her ear. She didn't know how he found her, didn't know who he worked for, didn't know what he wanted.

The not knowing terrified her.

But she didn't show it. She didn't allow anything to show on her face.

"Such a strange creature you make me out to be," she said.

"They don't call you Steffie Storm-Warning for nothing."

He had her name. Other corporate headhunters had found her before—a coolhunter always revealed herself in the moment of payment—but none of them had known who she was.

They had been dumb and obvious and she'd been able to give them the slip.

She couldn't slip by him. He was still pressed against her, as if they were lovers on a midday stroll.

She kept walking, but her breath was coming shallowly now. She hoped he didn't notice.

"You know," she snapped, "you're breaking about 18 laws touching me like that."

"You want to go to the cops?" he asked and she could hear the smile in his voice.

"No," she said. "I want you to back off."

She stopped suddenly and he skinned into her, nearly losing his balance. She shoved with her elbow, and he fell hard enough on the grass to let out a small grunt.

A girl stopped beside her and peered down. "He all right?" the girl asked. She was wired. Small chips dotted her face like jewelry. In the quick glance that Steffie got, she recognized audio, video, and net chips.

"He doesn't need to be," Steffie said.

"Ooo," the girl said. "Want me to get someone?" She tapped a chip on her chin. Security system too. The girl had money.

"Now," Steffie said. "I think he got the idea."

The girl laughed and continued, but not before Steffie caught a glimpse of her shoes. Scuffed Air Jordans with six laces tied in a flower bow.

An early adapter.

The vid had already hit the street.

The man was sitting up, a hand to his head. Steffie pushed him back down and put a foot on his chest. She got the distinct sense he was humoring her, that he could shove her aside with a flick of the wrist.

She didn't care. It was the look that counted. And right now it looked as if she were in control.

"I don't know who you are or what you want," she said, "but leave me alone."

to tell you that KD is dying."  
KD is dying."  
"They told me to tell

"Can't do that." He put a hand on her boot. "Italian leather. Nice. They don't make stuff this soft anymore."

She yanked her foot away. "What do you want?" she asked.

"Well, I don't want to broadcast your I.d.," he said. "If I wanted that, I could have done it by now."

He was right. He had obviously seen her long before she saw him. The thought made her even more uneasy.

"You're one of those stalkers, aren't you?" she asked, yanking her foot away. "Interested in the hunt, in toying with your prey, in killing slowly."

He smiled as he sat up, and rubbed the grass stains out of his sleeve. "You have a vivid imagination."

"I want to know why you're bothering me," she said. *And how you know who I am.* But she didn't say that. She had already said too much.

"It's not enough to say that I'm an admirer?"

"No," she said.

"Well, I am."

"Then admire from a distance."

"And let you dive away like you did before, only to come back with a new look, a new style."

"Maybe I'll retire," she said.

"Maybe," he said, "but you haven't yet. And you have more than enough to live on. You don't need to be on the streets, but they're in your blood."

She was so thoroughly chilled now that gooseflesh had risen on her arms. No one knew this much about her. No one. She had made certain there wasn't much information about her anywhere. Sometimes she wasn't sure she had that much information about herself.

"What do you want?" she asked for the third and final time.

He spread out his hands. They were empty. "Let me up?" he asked. She took her foot off his chest. He stood, brushed himself off, and adjusted the silver jacket. His cummerbund had twisted so that the self-sealing seam showed.

This time he kept his distance, and eyed her warily.

"Fashions have come and gone in the time it's taking you to answer this question," she said.

He wiped the mustard stain from the side of his mouth, glanced at his fingertips, winced, and rubbed them together as if he could make the mustard go away.

"Your family sent me," he said.

She went hot, then cold, then hot again. She hadn't thought of her family in years.

Not true.

She thought of them every day.

She hadn't spoken to them in years.

"Really?" she asked, with the right amount of sarcasm.

His smile was patient. "I didn't expect you to believe me," he said.

"And neither did they. They set up a home site accessible only to you, with names and numbers you'd know, they said. And the only way you can locate it is with this chip."

He held out his palm. In it was a red chip case the size of a sequin. She stared at it. "For all I know that could scramble my system or blow me away."

He didn't move. "They told me to tell you that KD is dying."

Those hot/cold flashes ran through her hair. "KD?" she said, before she could stop herself. "That's not possible."

"That's what they said."

She squinted, unsure whether to trust, unsure whether to try. "And you are?" she asked.

"Unimportant," he said and flipped the chip case toward her. She caught it in her left hand as he disappeared into the park.

SHE PUT THE CHIP IN THE SPECIAL NIP POUCH SHE'D HAD CARVED below her belly button. Nip pouches were expensive because they were for the criminal or paranoid. Hers was big enough to hold a wrist-rot and the surgeon had been good enough so that the pouch's opening looked like part of her belly button itself.

Then she went back to work.

—Caught a middle-aged woman topless, showing off surgically

enhanced breasts. Micropoodles—dyed pink and gold—were leashed to her nipple chains. Steffie hated it, but knew it would catch on with the 50 and older crowd, the aging Gen Xers who loved to torture their already burdened flesh.

(The chip lay cold against her skin, irritating, like a grain of sand in her eye.)

—Found a young man playing guitar beside a fountain, who looked as if he'd been dipped in gold. Gold hair, gold skin, gold eyes. As the light shifted, his colors deepened. She filmed a while, catching his transition from gold to bronze, bronze to brown. She didn't know what he used, and didn't ask when she flipped him his plastic. Someone would know, and someone would pay, several someones, depending on how she put it across the nets.

(The chip tingled, as if it were a live thing. Reminding her ...)

—Had the palmtop out, already filming an andrope's roped fingernails when she saw the identical twins, captured in miniature, holding their keeper's hand. They strolled through the park wearing frilly white, their eyes old and bored and—

She shut the vid off, slid her hand across her belly, and pressed the chip.

*KD's dying.*

She shoved the palmtop in her pocket, and headed out of the park to Leo's.

LEO WORKED OUT OF HIS APARTMENT IN A RUNDOWN CONDOMINIUM complex at the cross of Riverside and West 94th. The building dated from the 1980s, when it was posh. A lot of the original owners still lived there, but children and grandchildren who inherited had no respect for history. Leo was one of those. He liked the space and the old charms, but he hated the snobbishness that went with it.

Hence the little dive shop he ran from his first floor apartment's kitchen.

She used the code he'd given her five years before to subvert the security system. It, too, was once state of the art, in the post-dormant, high-tech days, but even with updates, a street kid could get in with a few security chips and a beeper. Most of the residents wore their own security these days and didn't care, but a handful of the elderly ones had no idea how people like Leo compromised their safety.

People like Leo, and people like Steffie.

She knew a few electronic tricks of her own, and had used them often enough to gain a top in a high-security building. She never took anything except a little space and a little privacy, and she was sure the residents never noticed.

They always had space and privacy to spare.

Leo kept his door unlocked. After her fifth visit to him she realized he didn't live in the apartment, only worked there, and didn't really care about the credits he made. Someone could—and often did—rip him off, and he continued, as if nothing had changed. She finally realized he was like her. The credits didn't matter; the challenge did.

She slid through the oak door and ran a hand over the motion detector that controlled the lights.

"Leo?"

"Kitchen, babe," he said, voice floating past the vintage mid-20th-century furniture. His tastes ran to chrome and plastic, stuff once considered cheap by the very people who initially lived in this building. Not cheap any longer. His couch, with its chrome legs that swooped into uncomfortable arms, and orange plastic seat, ran in the range of several thousand credits.

She slipped through the remodeled arch doorway into his dark and dingy kitchen. It smelled of oranges. Peels littered the floor. Her boots made small sucking sounds as she walked.

Leo hunched over the oak table he'd inherited with the apartment, and was using a welding tool as old as his couch to solder some metal together. She watched him work, seeing the small shield before his face shimmer in the old-fashioned light.

Then he shut off the torch, turned, and the shield faded to nothing. He grinned. "Been a while, babe."

She knew his name, but he didn't know hers. She liked it that way; he didn't mind. She suspected he wasn't named Leo at all, suspected it was as much an affection as the rest of the place.

She shrugged. "Been busy."

With a wave of a hand, he raised the lights. They didn't cut the gloom, but they illuminated his face and hers. His was mid-40s, careworn, no enhancements or lines. His eyes were a faded blue, his lips painted a pale maroon.

"Whatcha got?"

She was clutching the chip in her hand, and had been since she left the park. He didn't need to know about the hip pouch.

She came closer and opened her fist. The chip case gleamed in the odd light. "A man gave this to me. Said it was important."

"And you took it?" Leo raised a scarred eyebrow. He leaned over her palm, stared at the case, then reached behind himself and grabbed a pair of tweezers. He picked the case up using the tweezers and set it on a clear sheet of glass.

"You should know better than to touch something like this, babe," Leo said.

"I do," she said.

"But he gotcha, right? What'd he do, tell you it's full of credits?"

"No," she said, unwilling to say any more.

Leo shook his head. "I'll check it out for you. Want me to siphon the information off it?"

"Tell me what's there first," she said, "and if it's booty-trapped."

He grinned. "You give me all the fun jobs."

She shrugged. She'd never given him a job like this before.

"Head into the main room, wouldja? And can you wait? This might take some time."

"I can wait," she said, and left the kitchen.

The main room of his apartment overlooked Riverside, but the windows were so streaked with grime she could barely see through them. His vid equipment was old and obviously for client use.

She sat on the couch, put her hand in her hair, and found the shoelace. She yanked it out, let her hair fall into her face, and wrapped the lace around her fingers. It was worn and old, fraying on the sides. Like the laces of the first pair of tennis shoes she'd had when she was a child. KD had loved those shoes.

*Big people shoes*, she had said, wistfully.

"Big people shoes," Steffie murmured. She didn't want to think about KD. She leaned back, put an arm over her eyes, and let herself drift. This was as good a place to flop as any. Besides, she needed the rest.

IT WAS DARK WHEN LEO WOKE HER. HE WAS WEARING A PERSONAL light on each shoulder. They illuminated his face and a small circular area around him. The couch, the stained wood floor, and part of a rigged rug stood out in sharp relief. He was holding the chip case between his thumb and forefinger—a good sign.

"It performs an instant download from a prearranged site," he said. "It forces the computer it's in to go to that site, and remain there until the download's complete. Theoretically, the site is rigged so that only the people who can answer certain questions can get it, but I circumvented it. The site's computer is in Nebraska. It links to a system in Kansas City, then links to another system in Austin. All checked out clean. No traps. And no real traps built into this thing except the instant download."

"Which someone could trace to my system."

"In a nanosecond," he said. His grin increased. "But not to mine."

She took the chip from him. "You got something like that for me?"

"I thought you'd never ask," he said. Then his smile disappeared.

"Although I don't know why you'd want to. The site is your basic family crap. Genealogies, old photographs, histories, loss of former holdings, that sort of thing."

She rubbed the sleep off her face, hoping to keep any fleeting expression from him. "That's okay," she said.

"Your family?" he asked.

"I doubt it," she said. "Just some weirdness with my work."

"You sure, babe?" And this time his voice held concern. "I wouldn't want to give you something that'll get you in trouble. Of any kind."

"You found more trouble on there?"

He shook his head. "But folks don't normally bring this kinda stuff to me, you know? They bring me —" he paused, as if considering his words — "well, you know, stuff I would expect. Illegals, traps, listings no one should see. Not something this tame."

"And that scares you?" she asked.

"Different. Anything different. It's not good, you know."

She smiled. "Actually," she said. "I thrive on different."

THE EQUIPMENT WEIGHED HER DOWN. SHE WAS USED TO A PALM-top, some plastic, and nothing more. Leo gave her a laptop the size of a purse and told her to dump it when she was done.

She took an aircab to Chinatown, found a basement restaurant where no one seemed to speak English, and took a booth in the back. The decor was as old as the stuff in Leo's apartment. If it weren't for the singletops for sale at the front desk, the tiny access ports built into the centers of the tables, and the program-it-yourself wall displays beside each booth she'd have thought she'd entered some old flat black-and-white.

The lighting was dim, the booth ripped, and the soy sauce bottle so old that the red words were scraped off the glass. She ordered by pointing to three numbers on the wall display instead of talking to a waitress as she usually would have done. She liked having the opportunity to practice her Mandarin. It wasn't one of the recommended languages. She was fluent in eight non-recommended, and all seven recommended. It made the hunt easier, being able to speak the language of the people she came across.

There wasn't much hunting here. She checked it out the moment she sat down. An elderly woman wore a red silk dress that looked like it belonged at a pre-torn hua. Two business women came in sporting cats-eye glasses that had been in fashion on Wednesday three weeks before. A middle-aged man had staked out a table, and was eating slowly from six different plates. He wore the big jeans and oversized shirt that had been in style when he was a boy. She called people like that the fashion careless.

She didn't need to work. She'd had a profitable day despite the interruptions. She could continue to hunt, or she could see what this chip was all about.

She set the laptop on the table, and plugged the chip into the slot Leo had showed her. Instantly the 'top booted up, logged on, and started a download. She took a sip of tea and watched as her family history scrolled across the screen. A waitress set down a plate of egg rolls, and Steffie grabbed one, even though her stomach was churning.

Fifteen generations of history, then her own face flashed across the screen, aged 10, the last known formal full family portrait. Steffie didn't need to look. She already knew the image: Parents in the back, her father's crewcut looking dated even now, her mother's nose ring catching the light. Grandparents behind them, looking staid, her paternal grandfather's long hair a mess of gray curls. Five children, various ages, Steffie the apparent oldest, with the baby Lana cuddled in her mother's arms. Her twin brothers flanking Steffie, and of course, KD.

KD.

She sat on Steffie's lap, wearing a ruffled white dress and patent leather shoes that had belonged to their great-grandmother Svetlana. Her unnaturally blonde hair was combed in ringlets, and her rosy cheeks blended into skin that past generations had once described as porcelain.

But her eyes. Her eyes belied it all.

Hooded and rebellious, they caught and reflected all the anger that no one else in the shot expressed. Steffie remembered holding the tiny body, remembered its tension, remembered how the anger molded each underdeveloped muscle.

*KD is dying.*

*That's not possible.*

But it was. Only not yet. Not for another three, maybe four decades. Impossible.

A ploy to get her to contact the family?

Maybe.

But there were better ones.

Only her parents had never thought of them.

IT TOOK HER A WHILE TO FIND THE MESSAGE EMBEDDED IN THE CODING. They used the standard questions, the ones everyone answered easily—birthdate, along with city, state, and county code. Taxpayer identification number, resident identification number, and working resident identification number. Following that was a retinal scan (she wondered how Leo had gotten around that one) and a left thumbprint match.

Most of the questions she subverted as well. She hadn't typed her personal numbers in nearly 15 years. She couldn't remember her resident number, and she didn't have a working resident number. Even if she did, she wouldn't have given it up. She liked her privacy, and required it for the most part so that she could do her job. Her online identities were multiple and clear to her: Her real one was lost in the haze of memory.

When she found the hidden message, the machine gave her an instant hard copy. She wondered if it had done that for Leo, as well. Only he wouldn't have understood the message.

KE DYING. WANTS TO SEE YOU. COME BACK. YOU DON'T HAVE TO TALK TO US. BUT SEE HER THIS ONE LAST TIME.

WE HIRED SEVERAL DETECTIVES AND A BOUNTY HUNTER. THE DETECTIVES COULDN'T LOCATE YOU. THE HUNTER DID BUT WOULD NOT GIVE YOUR LOCATION. HE DID, HOWEVER, VOLUNTEER TO DELIVER THIS CHIP.

WE WOULD HAVE INCLUDED A PREPAID TICKET ON A SAME-HOUR SHUTTLE, BUT WE DON'T KNOW YOUR CITY OF ORIGIN. WE ARE STILL WILLING TO PAY YOUR WAY HOME.

NOTHING HAS CHANGED HERE. YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND US.

There was no signature. There didn't need to be. She recognized her father's abrupt tones in the words. Amazing how deep those memories went, how deep the effect of the lives that first touched hers. She hadn't spoken to her father in years, and yet she could still hear his voice in her mind, feel his presence as clearly as if she had left him yesterday.

She logged off, closed the laptop, and ripped up the hard copy, stuffing the pieces into her hip pouch for later disposal. Then she closed her eyes and leaned her head back, wishing her life could be as simple as it had been only 10 hours ago.

"Are you all right?" the waitress asked in Mandarin.

"Fine," Steffie replied in the same language. Then she sipped the rest of her tea, paid with unmarked plastic, grabbed the laptop, and left.

SHE TOOK THE FIRST SHUTTLE SHE COULD GRAB. IT DEPARTED FROM the rooftop pad at 63rd and Lex an hour after she left the restaurant. It had taken her nearly as long to get to the pad as it would take her to get to Ann Arbor.

It had been 10 years since she'd been outside of Manhattan. Ten years since she'd arrived, fresh from Austin, then the coolhunting capital of the country. She'd arrived with a few credentials and a lot of balls, ready to take the plunge that most hunters fail:

Staking out her own hunting grounds, making her place the secret center of cool.

Austin lost its spot because everyone knew that coolness originated there. So early adapters arrived, followed by the trend-followers, and the cool-wanna-bes. Inundated by copycats, hunters, and wanna-bes, the truly cool left, and it took hunters almost a year to find the next center.

Phoenix.

Only no one advertised it.

Steffie didn't want to follow the cool ones. She wanted to find them. So she had come here, figuring that many of the cool were among the poor and unable to afford same-hour shuttles or even day transport. Every city in America, she figured, maybe even every city in the world, had cool. She only had to find it.

And she knew none of the other hunters would come here, the heartland of American misery, the decaying edge of the known universe, where trends had not been set, really set, since the early part of the last century.

No one could come here.

Except her.

The shuttle was sleek and small. It sat on the rooftop like a black bird, wings permanently outstretched. A pilot sat up front and three other passengers were stepping into the back.

She punched her ticket code into the monitor, and watched as the electronic security shield shimmered into nothingness. She stepped across and heard a hum as it started up again.

As she climbed into the shuttle she saw only 10 passenger seats, and only five were taken. Not much cause to go to Michigan in the late evening. She sank into the leather chair, fastened her belt, and closed her eyes.

It would take five minutes from take-off to landing. Barely enough time to rest her eyes. Certainly not enough time to rethink the trip.

The shuttle landed on a concrete quad behind brick dorms on the University of Michigan campus. Steffie was the first to exit. She crossed the quad and entered the security gate, using one of her alias codes to get through the scanning equipment.

She stopped when she made it outside. Snow still covered the ground although the sidewalks were bare. The air was cool and dry and had a familiar smell, one she couldn't identify as anything more than childhood, than Ann Arbor.

Then home.

At the last thought, she winced. She hadn't had a home for 15 years, and she had liked it like that. Coolhunting suited her, with its insistence on anonymity, the constant need to keep trailing, the lack of attachments.

But here, here she was Stephanie Wyton-Brew, the second daughter of Andrew Wyton and Jennifer Brew, granddaughter of Elmer and Elise Wyton and Anthony and Josephine Brew.

And sister of KD.

She squared her shoulders, hoping they were strong enough to handle all that weight of the past, of an identity long lost. The house was just past the university, up on a hilly avenue whose name was lost in the fogs of her memory; near trees so old their canopied tops shrouded streets that had been built wide enough for carriages.

She had forgotten the name, but she hadn't forgotten how to get there. The way to the house she had grown up in was embedded as deeply into her memory as her father's voice.

Her stomach churned. She had nothing to say to these people. Nothing to say to anyone, really, even KD.

KD.

The reason for it all.

Steffie trudged along the sidewalk, wishing she had stopped long enough to get real boots instead of those dated Italian things. The thin leather did not protect her feet. And she wasn't wearing a coat. She looked like a homeless person in the predawn darkness, and she knew if any of the residents of the Old Westside neighborhood peered out of their windows, they would wonder who was breaking curfew and why.

No one  
one did child-child enhancements.  
No one did child-child enha

The walk to the house took three times longer than the shuttle ride. She stopped outside, astonished at how something that had loomed so large in her memory could look so small now.

The house had been built in 1910. It had two stories, a wide front porch, and a garage that had once been a barn tucked around the back. The large oak tree that covered the front lawn was half dead now. She and her brothers used to play around it.

KD had watched from the porch.

Lana hadn't even been born yet.

Steffie sighed, ran a hand through her messy hair, and walked up the path. It was cracked, and smaller than she remembered. Her feet barely fit on the stones that her father had so carefully laid during the summer of her 13th year.

The memories were coming back.

She hated that.

She had thought she was beyond them.

She paused in front of the glassed-in front door and raised a hand. But she didn't knock. No one should have to knock on the door to their childhood home. She brought her hand down, bypassed the primitive security system, and let herself in.

The house smelled of banana bread, lemon furniture polish, and her father's cigars. The cigar scent was faint—almost a memory—as if he hadn't lit it up in a long time. A small shudder ran down her back. How many times had she come home from school to these smells? Sometimes the baked goods overlaying the polish were cookies, sometimes it was cake, but the house always smelled of baking. Her mother worked at home, and she always took a break by making something sweet.

It was a wonder she wasn't fat. She didn't know about her brothers. She hadn't seen them since she left home, and of course, hadn't heard from them.

KD couldn't get fat.

The grandfather clock that had sat in Wyton households since the mid-19th century bonged the half-hour. The sound was familiar and unfamiliar. Steffie jumped.

The household was asleep. She could feel it in the stillness, almost as if a part of her could hear the uneven breathing from a floor away.

The main staircase with its newel posts and its wooden banisters (now worth such a fortune that her parents actually should update their security system) wound toward the upstairs bedrooms. She wondered if hers was still as she remembered it, or if her parents had turned it into a guest room.

She gazed up the steps into the darkness. KD was up there. If Steffie had any courage she would wake KD, have a short visit, and then leave. If she had any courage.

But she had none. She wanted to put off seeing KD as long as possible.

She avoided the staircase, and crossed beside the built-in bookshelves. The living-room's layout hadn't changed in 15 years. She sank onto the couch, fluffed a pillow, and leaned back.

Let them be surprised in the morning.

**S**HE AWOKED TO HER MOTHER'S FACE CENTIMETERS FROM HERS. Her mother had aged naturally, with lines and age spots and skin blotchy from uneven sun exposure. Her hair had gone completely gray, and she wore glasses instead of having her eyes enhanced.

Enhancements had lost their charm, after KD.

Her nose ring remained, though, the tiny diamond stud Steffie's father had given her in lieu of an engagement ring.

"Stephanie?" her mother asked, voice rising. "Sweetheart?"

Steffie blinked as if she were waking from a sound sleep when in fact she had awakened the instant her mother sat down. One of the

benefits of flopping, an instant wakefulness.

"Mother." She kept her voice cool, as if she had awakened to her mother's touch every day for the past 15 years.

"He found you then."

The answer was obvious, so Steffie did not grace the remark with a reply.

"Why didn't you contact us? We'd have booked your ticket."

"No need," Steffie said. She yawned and stretched. The couch was the best bed she'd had in weeks. "Can I use the shower?"

"Sure," her mother said. "Towels are —"

"Where they always are, I know," Steffie said. And so were the extra clothes, and the special linens, and KD.

KD.

"How is she?" Steffie asked.

"Dying," her mother said. The response was curt, as if it held both anger and embarrassment.

Or maybe Steffie was just reading that in.

"I didn't think that was possible," Steffie said, although she had suspected it was. She had suspected from the beginning.

"It was—you know—a long time ago. The technology was new."

Early adapters. She had never thought of her parents that way, but that's what they were.

Early adapters.

She wondered who set the trend.

She wondered who had coollunted it.

She shivered.

"So what's happening?"

"Nothing you'd notice," her mother said. "It's all internal organ decay. On the cellular level, which makes sense, of course. Outside nothing has changed. She's still quite pretty. It's all so very Victorian—"

"The skin is an organ," Steffie said.

"But it's the most real of all of her parts," her mother said. "It didn't need much..."

She let her voice trail off.

"Tampering," Steffie said, and stood up. She was, for the first time, conscious of how filthy she was. How long had it been since she bathed? How long since she changed clothes? It didn't matter in New York. People were people were people there. But here, a single stain on the couch was an international incident.

"She wants to see you," her mother said. "You're all she's been asking for."

Steffie didn't want to hear that. She ran a hand through her hair, noticing this time not just the mess, but the grease as well. "After I clean up," she said. "She can wait one more hour."

"I guess," her mother said, although she sounded doubtful.

Steffie froze. "How long does she have?"

Her mother was still kneeling beside the couch. She looked like a supplicant in St. Patrick's. Her mother leaned her head on the couch's arm.

"I don't know," she said. "A month. Maybe more. We've been looking for you for a long time, Stef."

"It's amazing you found me at all," Steffie said, and even more amazing that *I showed up*, she thought, but the words didn't leave her mouth. There were some things, no matter how old she got, that she could never ever say.

**T**HE SHOWER WAS A TIME WARP. THE SAME RUSTED SHOWERHEAD, the same hard water, the same glass double doors. The soap was different, modern, softer and better for her skin.

She wondered if they had bought it for KD.

She found some of her old clothes in the extra clothes closet and put

did child-child enhancements.  
No one did child-child enhancements.  
enhancements.

them on. They were too big, but the fabric was still good. The look wasn't even dated—not that it meant anything, since dated happened within an instant these days.

When she looked in the steamed mirror, she saw a face that she thought had disappeared when she left Ann Arbor the first time. Freshly scrubbed, innocent, eyes wide and blue and younger, it seemed, than KD's had been in that ancient family portrait.

She leaned her head against the silvered glass. She couldn't put it off any longer.

KD.

She had to see KD.

It was harder than it sounded. She hadn't been able to look at KD for years. Not since she understood what her parents had done to her older sister.

Steffie walked down the wide hallway, the thinning carpet hard and rough beneath her feet. She paused outside KD's door. How often she used to go into this room, first for comfort and then simply to be with her sister. As a child, Steffie had never understood KD's unchanging face. Only that KD was always as she expected, always as she had known she would be.

Until the anger started.

Maybe it had always been there. Maybe it became, in Steffie's 10th year, too much for KD to close in. But suddenly the beautiful perfect little girl had become every parent's nightmare: the tantrum-throwing screaming monster child. The child that was an embarrassment; the child that made the parents look like monsters themselves.

It was, Steffie realized much later, KD's only revenge.

Steffie pushed the door open. The room was filled with morning light. The white ruffled curtains were open to the backyard, the window closed because of the last of winter's chill. The canopied bed still sat against the north wall, but the ruffles were white now instead of pink. A comforter covered the bed, nearly hiding the small form in it.

KD.

Her ringlets were fanned across the pillow, her long lashes gracing her chubby cheeks. Her skin was, as her mother had said, still the color of porcelain, her small mouth still formed a perfect bow. KD had the face of a perfect child, with features that had been used by portrait painters to portray angels and cherubs and saintly children for over 150 years.

KD had been damned by fashion, by advertising, by perfection. Their parents had got caught up in the enhancement craze of the early 'teens, and had thought it would be wonderful to have a child forever. Not a child that would grow to become a rebellious teenager and then an angry adult. But a child, a real human child, forever.

The doctors hadn't even tried to talk them out of it. They had pushed for it, in fact, probably seeing all the credits multiplying in their accounts, not realizing that lawsuits, years later, would poll those credits right back out again.

Steffie grabbed the white straight-backed chair with a little heart carved in its back, and pulled it beside the bed. Then she touched her sister's hand for the first time in years.

KD's skin was soft, a child's skin. Steffie half expected it to smell of talcum. Instead, the room had a vague sweet odor, the odor of decay.

"KD," she said softly.

KD did not open her eyes. Steffie felt pain slice through her heart. Had she come too late then? She hadn't even known 12 hours ago that her sister was dying. It wouldn't be fair.

"KD," she said again, this time raising her voice slightly.

KD's eyelids flickered, then opened, revealing those round eyes of startling blue. Steffie had forgotten how rich the color was, a color that could not be duplicated by human beings, no matter how hard they tried.

Those eyes filled with tears. "Steff"

Steffie nodded.

"They said they couldn't find you," KD said.

Steffie smiled, shrugged. "They were wrong." She left off the "as usual." She felt the familiar—and odd—incongruity she had always felt with her sister; the desire to protect a child, and the knowledge that KD was savvier than most gave her credit for.

KD's hand slipped out from under hers, and grabbed Steffie's first and middle fingers. "I'm glad you came," she said.

"Me, too," Steffie led.

"No you're not," KD said. "You have a life. I've been trying to follow it, on the net, seeing which style change is yours. They never make it here, you know."

"I know," Steffie said.

"I think I found your trademark. You like flamboyance, don't you? No elegance for you. Someone taking risks. Someone willing to take that extra step that might be a success or a mistake."

Steffie smiled. That was her trademark. She had never thought of it in those terms before.

"I saw a woman talking about coolhunting on the TV," KD said. "She said you couldn't pick a cool person without talking to them first, without knowing their attitudes, but I bet you can. I bet —"

"KD," Steffie said, not wanting to talk about herself. "I've got over four hundred million credits stashed in various accounts. I can get you treatments, things Mother and Dad can't afford. Maybe we can find a way to reverse this, or change it. Growth hormones, neuro triggers, enhancement removal therapy, they're all expanding industries. There might be some solutions you don't know about —"

"So that I can grow big and strong like you?" KD's voice was dry. Steffie hadn't forgotten the anger, but she had forgotten the manifestation of it. The soft tones, the deceptively calm way KD had of speaking.

"So that you don't die." The words came out easier than Steffie had expected, given the pain that was slicing through her heart had moved into her throat.

KD removed her grip from Steffie's hand. "You know," KD said, "Mother and Dad never thought this through. They had the most perfect little girl, you know, but once their friends' children were grown, they stopped showing me off. I became a burden. It was like a failure on their part, that they had enough money to stop me here. We never left the house."

That was after Steffie had run away. "No," she said. "I didn't know."

"It didn't matter," KD said. "I didn't like playing any more with confused children, and adults didn't want to hold a conversation with me. They would turn away like I was a doll come to life."

Which was what she looked like. Permanent child enhancements were still done, but rarely now, and almost always by people whose kids would make them a fortune only when they were young. Child-models, child-actors, child-singers all had their bodies frozen in form, but not permanently any more. Even "permanent" child enhancements lasted only as long as the child was worth something. Once the tastes changed—and they did, even in film, netvid, and advertising—then the child hyphens were able to grow up.

No one did child-child enhancements.

The common consensus now was that it was cruel.

"So I've been living on the nets. I thought I'd find you."

Steffie's throat was dry. She didn't know KD had been looking for her. "I did find you, you know," KD said. "Only a ghost. Only a flicker. But I did find you. And you helped me. I wanted to tell you that."

Steffie shook her head. "I didn't do anything."

"Sure you did. Fashion betting. I kept wagering on you. It took some time, some net watching, but I had the time. I saw the style introduced and I bet on the adaptation time. I was good at it, Stef. Almost as good as you."

Steffie swallowed. She'd heard of fashion betting, but never practiced it. It seemed to her like a pastime of the rich, the idle, the people who could never do anything with their lives.

Like KD.

KD lowered her voice. "I have five million credits in an account in your name, Stef. It'd been more but for the doctors."

"The doctors?" Steffie asked.

KD nodded. Then she smiled. "Enhancements like mine don't reverse. It's too old."

It took a moment for Steffie to understand what KD had said. "Then you were trying —"

"To grow up," KD said. She closed her eyes, and for a moment it seemed as if she had gotten her wish. Her cheekbones were more

prominent than they had ever been, her skin sallow. She looked like a tiny old lady on her deathbed.

Steffie ran a hand through her damp hair. She didn't want to walk through this emotional thicket. She had left because dealing with KD had torn her up. Because her family had focused only on KD the child, not KD the unhappy child-woman.

"You made this happen?" Steffie asked.

KD opened her eyes. Her smile was tiny, girlish, like a child who'd been caught playing with the wrong toys. "Growth hormones."

"How did you buy them? Didn't you need Mom's permission?"

Permanent children were always considered children in the eyes of the law. The assumption was that these beings were designed not to grow up, so no matter how much experience they accumulated, no matter how many years they had lived, they would never achieve adult status in the eyes of the world.

KD scrunched her pillow back. The movement looked difficult. The bones of her arms stuck out of what once had been plump cherubic flesh. "That's why I had to see you," she said, her voice at a whisper. "I used your name."

"What?" All the muscles in Steffie's back went rigid.

"I used your name." KD's eyes were wide. Her lower lip was trembling. "You weren't using it. And I needed a legal adult to fill out the forms, to give permissions and send in the e-papers. That's why the money's in your name."

"You used my name to what?" Steffie asked.

"To get me the appointments. To get me the treatments."

Steffie swallowed. If she had been here, she might have helped. But she hadn't been here. She had left long ago. "All right. Why is that a problem?"

"Because I lied," KD said. A tear trembled at the tip of one of her lashes. "I said I got the enhancements less than 20 years ago."

"And that's important because—"

"The growth hormones don't work on enhancements like mine." Her voice rose into a wail. She did sound young. She acted young. But Steffie didn't know if that was because she had been in this room for the past 30 years or because the enhancements did indeed keep her young.

"But you tried anyway."

"I read online that they just said that the hormones didn't work to keep us older ones in line. So I thought I could try it. But —" she rubbed the tear away with one small fist — "what no one said was that the hormones worked on people like me. They just worked wrong."

"Wrong?" Steffie asked. Her stomach was queasy. From the kitchen below rose the scents of coffee mixed with waffles.

"Wrong," KD said. "I'm aging, inside. Steffie, I have the heart of a 95-year-old woman, and it gets older every day. All the other organs are changing like that too."

"Except your skin."

"Even my skin, but not as fast. The enhancements didn't have to touch it much because it would stay young if the rest of me did."

"Isn't there something they can do to reverse this?" Steffie asked.

"More enhancements, maybe? Something to block the hormones?"

"No," KD said. "Not with this kind of destruction. The thing is, three weeks ago, I got legal notification for you that as my sister, you should have known the year I got enhanced. If I die, they'll go after you."

"After me? How?"

KD shrugged. "Misuse of information. Lying on government forms.

Enough to bound you. To take your money. To freeze your identity."

Steffie kept her expression neutral. It didn't matter. She had enough identities. All it meant was that she would formally lose Stephanie Wyton-Brew. Whom she had already lost.

KD took her response for anger. She looked away.

"I wanted to grow up, Steffie." KD's voice was soft, plaintive. "You got to go out and see the world, all by yourself. I've never gone farther than Ann Arbor. I'm not even supposed to cross the street alone."

The complaint made the skin on Steffie's back crawl. She'd heard it all her life.

She was wrong about everything changing

Here, nothing did.

She couldn't pay attention to that. She couldn't or she would go mad.

"Okay," Steffie said, "first things first. We see if we can find you some solutions. I know folks in companies with experimental treatments. Since we've already broken a few laws, we may break a few more and see if they'll send us some stuff that'll reverse this aging process. Then we'll find a doctor who'll work with you. We'll take it one step at a time."

"Will that work?" KD asked. Her voice was curious, but her eyes weren't. There was something in them, something Steffie didn't recognize.

She shook it off. She hadn't seen KD in a long time. How could she pretend to understand her?

"There's only one way to find out if it'll work," Steffie said.

"Are you willing to try?" KD asked.

Steffie felt it, that familiar sensation that she had just been out-manuevered, out-thought by a girl who couldn't get out of bed. But she didn't see how.

"I don't know," Steffie said.

"I won't beg," KD said.

"I'm not asking you to," Steffie said. But deep down, she almost wished KD would.

STEFFIE NEEDED TIME TO THINK. SHE LET HER MOTHER serve her waffles with fresh strawberries and real butter, coffee and fresh-squeezed orange juice, just as if this were a Sunday morning and Steffie had never left home. The kitchen was still the center of the house, and on this morning it had electric lights on against the winter gloom. The cabinets were white, done in 1990's kitsch, the stove a flat-top with a conventional interior. Only the refrigerator was new: a compact model that miniaturized food and expended it upon removal.

Steffie said nothing about her family's penchant for keeping things small.

Her father sat at the head of the table, an e-paper open but unread beside him. Her mother was still making waffles in the stove's waffle-maker attachment. Dozens of waffles for only four people.

Steffie wondered how much food her mother discarded every day.

Her father was staring at her.

Fifteen years had diminished her father. His shoulders had hunched forward, his face had gone flabby, and his crew cut was an inch long, making him look as if he wore a brush on the top of his head. The hair had gone gray, just as his skin had gone a pale white. He looked like an old man, even though he wasn't.

She found herself staring back at him, chewing as she did so. She had forgotten that cooking was one of her mother's best skills. The waffles were wonderful; it was a shame most of them would be discarded. She knew half a dozen people in the park alone who could have lived on these waffles for a week.

"You shouldn'ta left," her father said finally, his voice grating on his throat, as if he didn't want the words to come out.

She shrugged, chewed a bit more, and swallowed. "I didn't want to stay here."

"KD needed you. She loved you. You were the only one she talked to," maybe she'd have more friends if you let her out of the house," Steffie supplied.

"She's too ill," her mother said.

"She wasn't 15 years ago," Steffie said.

Her father looked down at his e-paper. Her mother poured more batter into the waffle maker. Steffie took a sip of her orange juice, her heart pounding.

She set the glass down. "Look," she said, unable to stand the silence. She had grown up in this silence. It was a powerful thing, a wall she couldn't breach. Every time she brought up a topic that was forbidden, her parents would greet that topic with silence, pretending as if she hadn't even spoken, yet making her feel guilty for opening her mouth.

"Look," she said again. "You know what KD did."

"Some of it," her mother said.

"And you knew she implicated me to do it."

"Yes." That was her mother again, in a whisper. She shot a furtive

glance at her husband, but he didn't look up. He was going to ignore this conversation if he could.

"And you still sent for me?" Steffie clenched a fist. "Why don't you take care of her? Or did you want her to die?"

"She won't die," her father said.

"Oh, just like she won't grow up?" Steffie asked. "Did you arrange that too?"

"No." Her mother put her hand on her father's shoulder. He covered it with his own. Steffie had forgotten that gesture, the gesture of unity from her childhood.

"We were hoping—" her mother said, and her voice broke. She swallowed to cover the emotion, and then took a deep breath. "We were hoping you could help her."

"Me?" Steffie asked. "Why me?"

"Because she won't take our help."

Steffie looked at both of them. "Why not?"

Steffie's mother bit her lower lip. "She wants to take too many risks." Obviously, Steffie thought. But said nothing. "So you want me to take the risks with her?"

"No," her mother said. "We thought you could talk her out of them."

"Me? Why me?"

"Because you loved her," her father said. "At least you did once."

"I felt sorry for her," Steffie said.

"You adored her," her mother said. "You followed her everywhere. And then when you got bigger, you carried her with you. She was your advisor, your best friend, your sister. Surely you remember."

Steffie remembered. And she remembered the late night conversations, the pounding of tiny fists against her chest, the way KD's cruel small fingers pinched Steffie's developing body, the symbol of the difference between them. She remembered it all, and the pain of it, the confusion she felt when her beloved sister had turned all her rage on Steffie because Steffie would grow up.

"I was a child," Steffie said.

"KD still is," her father said.

Steffie shook her head. "That's the thing you two never got, did you? The treatment you gave her did not leave her a child. She's an adult, but the law doesn't recognize it. Her appearance doesn't allow it. But her mind has grown, and changed, and leached. Just like yours has."

"You haven't spent these years with her," her mother said. "You don't know—"

"Of course I know," Steffie said. "It was happening even as I was growing up. It's hard when your sister, who is supposed to be a perpetual three-year old, has a better vocabulary and more knowledge of human nature than you do."

"The doctors said that would happen," her father said. "There'd be some learning, of course, but other things would always be beyond her."

"Like making a living? Like thinking for herself?"

Her mother nodded.

"How do you think she paid for the treatments?" Steffie said. "She didn't just implicate me. She broke into my systems, used my name and ID."

"There've been movies about that," her mother said. "I could do that."

"Could you fashion gamble?" Steffie asked.

"What?" her mother said.

"Fashion gamble," Steffie said. "KD made five million credits fashion gambling. That's how she planned to pay for everything. She has her own money. She wants out of here. And the only way she can get out is to grow up."

"It's too late for that now," her mother said.

Steffie sighed. Fifteen years, 15 years of independence, of no contact with these people, and the instant she walked in the door, the old irritations returned. Her parents' refusal to acknowledge what they had done to their own daughter and the consequences of it. The effect it

had on the family.

The effect it had on KD.

"No," Steffie said. "It might not be too late. We have five million credits to work with and that buys a lot of treatments."

Steffie didn't tell them about her credits. She would probably need those, if she did something wrong, if she made a wrong move.

"The problem is," she continued, "that KD won't try any treatment, not as long as she stays small."

"She wouldn't be KD if she grew," her father said.

Steffie turned toward him. His head was still bent. There were dandruff flakes in his bristly hair. The food Steffie had eaten sat like a lump in her stomach.

"You would rather have KD die?" Steffie asked.

"Seems to me," her father said, "that KD will die either way."

"Childhood was never meant to be permanent," Steffie said. "Nothing in this world is meant to be permanent."

Her father did not answer. He drew his silence around him like a blanket, a shield against Steffie's words.

"You can help her, then," her mother said, ignoring the interchange. "You know what to do."

"I can try," Steffie said, regretting the words the instant that she spoke them. "But you'll have to help me in return."

"Anything," her mother said.

"I won't even do anything until you agree to let KD grow up."

"No," her father said.

Her mother squeezed her father's shoulder. Steffie saw him wince in pain. "Whatever it takes," her mother said. "Whatever it takes."

**H**ER PARENTS' COMPUTER WAS IN THE DEN. HER MOTHER HOVERED behind her as she went inside, and faced a machine the size of a mirror, an antique she remembered from her childhood. She wondered if this was the machine KD had used to track her coolantium, to make her five million credits, to gamble on fashion. She hadn't seen anything in KD's room, but that meant nothing. Computers could be small as a fingernail these days. Steffie had even coolantied a couple of full body interfaces and tiny tattoos that were full-performance machines. The craze had lasted 10 days, one of her longest and best.

"Codes and passwords?" Steffie asked as she put her hand on the leather chair. It felt the same, cool to the touch, the leather softened with age.

"They're programmed in."

Steffie wanted to warn her, to say that such things were irresponsible. But when had her parents been sensible or responsible? They had only appeared so. And appearances were so important to them.

"Scars?" Steffie asked.

"Retinal, palm, full face for some things," her mother said.

Steffie sighed. She could go around the scars, but she didn't want to. She didn't know who was monitoring the house, if anyone, but she didn't want to do anything too suspicious. Looking for a cure for KD was probably unusual enough, but easily explainable. Going around security systems, well, that was a felony, and one they would most certainly blame on her.

"Okay," Steffie said, not sitting down. "Get me on."

Her mother glanced at her, then went to the chair. It sagged under her weight. She put her hands on the keyboard, typing in codes. "What system?" her mother asked.

"Excuse me?" Steffie said.

"What Net do you want?" Her mother asked, clarifying the question.

"Anything," Steffie said. She wasn't going to search for research—her family could do that—she was going to hunt. What she did best. Only she had never done it this way. "On second thought, go to one of the difficult

was never meant to be permanent."

"Childhood was never meant to be



ones. Better to have too much security than not enough."

Her mother typed. The machine was old enough to have a clicking keyboard, something that sounded grating to Steffie. She preferred silence, required silence in fact when she typed anything. If she had to have sound, she used a voice-activated system.

Then her mother eased out of the chair. The ancient monitor blurred a tunnel that should have been an automatic VR view. Steffie sat down. The chair was warm.

"Thanks," Steffie said, and began to work.

The medical boards were encoded and filled with garbage: people discussing their symptoms, asking for help with common problems, debating the financial practicalities of curing old age. The fundamental arguments, the ones she had heard all her life. Only she had known, as did anyone with a brain, that if they could create children like KD, they could stop people from dying. They could arrest them at any age—35, 50, it didn't matter—but they refused because of the burden it would place on society.

Funny how perpetual children were not a burden when older, more experienced people were.

Hunting in here was not like hunting the streets. It was more complex. But like streets, the attention to detail was the same. She wasn't looking for a paper on KD's arrested development or on growth hormones. Steffie was searching chat areas, listening to live conversations while she was digging through the research boards.

Listening for that single comment, looking for the silence that implied more knowledge than the user was willing to admit to. Whenever she found a name she cross-referenced it with the Copyright Office's annual publication of the names of people who applied for patents.

By evening she had a headache, and her eyes ached from looking at material designed for systems that lasted hours instead of years. Her mother, who had apparently left the room sometime that morning, brought in three sandwiches, some homemade potato chips, and a mochachino, something that no one had made in so many years the taste actually invoked childhood—a small dinner party where Steffie at age 3, the only time she was KD's contemporary, got to taste her first caffeinated beverage.

And hated it.

She smiled at the memory, took a sandwich, and felt her mouth water at the prospect of eating choice-cut beef. Her parents had never skimped on food. They had skimped on other things, but never food.

Her mother returned some time later to take the plate.

"Steffie," she said softly.

Her voice sounded like an explosion in the tight room. Steffie, who'd been following two chats and cross-referencing patents, listening to on-line medical radio, and searching the drug listings, jumped.

"KD?" she asked.

"No change," her mother said. "How are you doing?"

"Fine," Steffie said, in a tone that brooked no more interruption.

Her mother watched her for a moment. When it became clear that Steffie wasn't going to say anything more, her mother took the empty mochachino glass, and left the sandwiches. Steffie grabbed another as she returned her attention to her work.

Twelve nonstop hours later she had learned a lot of things, some she didn't want to know. Not surprisingly, but something she had not thought of, was that KD was not alone. Large groups of "children" haunted Net space, some in groups, some individually. Most were using their parents' systems illegally, using illegal identities, and playing the same tricks KD had.

Steffie wondered how much of this KD knew, and how much she had used before she got ill.

Or even if some of these groups had helped her take Steffie's identity, helped her find the doctor who had been willing to work on her without a certified adult present.

But all of those were questions for later, questions Steffie might never get answered. And although they were irritating, they weren't really relevant.

Not considering what else she found.

Ninety-seven patents had been issued to help the "children" grow. Another 52 had been issued to cope with diseases of the muzzing, and 25 had been issued to deal with the effects of growth hormones on the early adapters.

Twenty-five.

And of those 25, 20 had received permission to experiment on humans.

Of those 20, 10 had completed the studies.

Of those 10, only one had "children" who survived.

Only one.

At that point, Steffie had stopped and put her face in her hands. His treatment had been effective, but it had done something the parents opposed, and they had shut him down.

It had left the growth hormones intact.

The early adaptive children had arrived at his office, sickly on the edge of death, just like KD, and had left full adults, with years ahead of them. The legal problems had been startling. The new adults had no legal standing since they were registered as permanent children, and their parents, who had uniformly not approved the treatment (the "children" had gotten it as they had the growth hormones, through theft of adult documentation), had sued.

The doctor was no longer practicing. His bio said that he worked in the CUNY system as a biology teacher, and saw no one.

Especially not people like KD.

It seemed a bit too pat.

Steffie ate the last sandwich, and stared at the screen. Her eyes hurt, her head ached, and her shoulders were so tight that she pulled a muscle.

The sandwich was stale, the bread hardened by its exposure to air.

Her father would never approve. He would rather have KD die. Steffie closed her eyes.

KD, of course, would be excited about it.

Her mother would not take a stand, and Steffie would be in the middle, as always.

And that was assuming the doctor would work with them, that he would give up his safe little job in the CUNY system, and break the law to help KD.

Why had Steffie come back?

Why did she think she could save her sister's life?

She had never been able to before.

**T**HE HOUSE WAS ASLEEP WHEN SHE FINALLY STOOD UP. SHE stretched and her spine cracked. It had been a long time since she spent a day in a chair, not moving. Usually she was on the move, always doing something different, always finding a way to keep herself busy, to be creative.

But not to think.

Never to think.

Or remember.

She remembered so much about this house. She remembered its rhythms, the silent hush it got when all the occupants but her were sleeping. She remembered the way the ceiling groaned in a harsh wind, the soft spot in the center of the fifth stair up, the wobbly spindle near the top of the banister.

And most of all, she remembered KD.

—You gotta help me. You're bigger. You could take me on the shuttle. —

—I'm not old enough.

—They won't have to know. And then when I'm on my own, I'll find

"Childhood was never meant to be permanent."

a way to repay you.

—You can't be on your own, KD.

—Then you can live with me. You'll be my adult. Only you won't have to supervise me because I won't need it. You'll do that, won't you, Steff? Think of all the times I helped you...

And most of all, she remembered the night she ran away. KD was still an accepted oddity, then. A member of an elite group, a prized possession, a status symbol not unlike expensive jewels or a house in the country. KD had given one of her best performances at dinner: a combination of precocious intelligence and nauseating cuteness. She had conversed with the visiting German professor in his own language about the upcoming celebration of 30 years of his country's unity, and then, by request, she had lipped her way through a hulaify. She had cuddled on command with her father's boss, a childless woman who always treated KD like a stray animal, and then she had graciously accepted the small gifts of toys some of her parents' regular visitors had brought.

The toys got tossed into a corner of her room and she had run to Steffie's, sobbing in her arms. Steffie had held her, understanding KD's humiliation for the first time, and the futility of it all.

And she had confronted their parents like she would have to confront them now, and they had told her she would never understand.

Never.

They were right.

Oh, she knew the history, but it never made sense to her. They had lost their first child, a girl, of some sudden onset disease that she should have been inoculated for, but somehow wasn't. (They always skipped over this part, as if it were someone else's fault, not their own.) By then, they had already had KD. Shortly after their first child died, they decided to prevent KD's loss; they decided to have a child forever, so they not only inoculated her against all childhood diseases, they also inoculated her against adulthood.

And the treatment had been so awful, they decided not to do it to the rest of their children. But KD had given them courage to have other children. She had given them their life back.

So they used to say, back when KD was their status symbol, their performing monkey.

Before society decided what they did was no longer fashionable, and just a little bit wrong.

**B**Y THE TIME STEFFIE FINISHED THE SANDWICH SHE knew what she had to do. She couldn't run this time. She had chosen to come back on her own. She had chosen to face the heartache, to see KD this last time. And in seeing her sister, in seeing what she had become, what she had done to herself just to try to have a normal life, Steffie could no longer leave.

KD deserved a chance to live her life, any life, on her own terms. Not on her parents' terms. Not on Steffie's.

On her own.

In her searches, Steffie had found the exact costs of the doctor's legal bills, and the extent of his garnishment at CUNY. He had never made much money. He had done this for a reason not covered in the gossip trades, a reason known only to him. But he was in deep and severe debt, and he could no longer practice his real trade. He had taken the job at CUNY out of desperation, wasting his talents teaching children for less than half of what he made before.

It bothered her that the information had been easy to find. It made her leery. But not leery enough to ignore him.

She offered to pay his legal bills, current and future, if he promised to treat KD. She sent this to him in encrypted E-mail, routed through half a dozen sources, and out of one of her dormant names.

Traceable, she supposed, but she doubted it. The amount of work would keep him busy for the next two weeks.

And that was if he were an expert in computers, which he clearly was not.

His response was startlingly immediate.

He accepted.

**S**OME THINGS BECAME CLEAR. THE DOCTOR WAS NOT WHAT HE seemed. The credits he wanted were too high; the address he gave was far from CUNY, and he offered to provide the adult KD with proper identification.

Steffie accepted it all. She had worked the seamier sides of the street too long to be shocked at the lengths people went to in order to get their work done.

Maybe her parents would have been shocked.

Maybe KD would have.

But Steffie knew:

Sometimes you had to do whatever it took.

**H**ER PARENTS NO LONGER SLEPT IN THE SAME ROOM. THAT WAS a change, and one Steffie had not expected. Her mother had taken the twins' room for herself. Only one bed remained, and a few of the twins' things, but her mother's presence there did not look temporary. Her books were piled on the nightstand, her clothing littered the floor. A small entertainment unit with everything from computer remote to VR to good old-fashioned television was hooked to the foot of the bed.

The faint nightlight, a glass ball that had a phosphorescent glow, which Steffie had always associated with her parents' room, was on the dresser.

Steffie had stumbled into this room by accident, looking for her old nightgown to carry into her parents' bedroom, not expecting her mother to be inside.

Her mother slept on her back with one arm flung above her head. She looked younger than Steffie had ever seen her—a combination of the soft light and the relaxation of sleep. Steffie saw herself in her mother's features, the long narrow face, the small mouth. She saw KD too, the promise of what KD would be.

Would have been.

Steffie went to her mother's side, crouched, and touched her mother's shoulder. When she didn't wake, Steffie's heart started to pound. She knew her mother was all right; she could hear the rhythmic breathing, but she wondered if her mother had taken anything to help her sleep, and felt the old frustration rise even though she didn't yet have proof.

The impracticability of it. A sick child—a sick person—Steffie still had to mentally correct herself, and she hated it—in the house, and her mother took some kind of chemical to help her sleep.

Steffie shook her mother's shoulder harder than she initially intended. Her mother's eyes blinked, and her eyebrows came together in a frown.

"Stephanie?" Her mother's voice was slurred with sleep.

"Wake up, Mother, I need to talk to you," Steffie said.

"KD. Is she—?"

"I haven't been in her room yet. I've come to see you."

Her mother was waking up more completely now. She slid back toward the pillows and pushed her hair out of her face. "You found something," she said in a normal voice.

"Yes," Steffie said. "A doctor who knows how to help KD."

"How much will it cost?"

More than Dad wants to pay. Steffie nearly answered, but decided at that moment not to say anything. "I'll worry about the cost."

"She's still our responsibility," her mother said.

Steffie shook her head. "You involved me."

"We'll take care of it," her mother said.

"No," Steffie was adamant. Her mother looked confused. Steffie wasn't about to admit the real reason for her generosity.

She didn't want her parents to interfere.

When it became clear that her mother would not accept Steffie's argument, Steffie said simply, "I guess I owe her for running away."

Her mother said nothing to that. She adjusted the blankets, then reached over and clicked on the bedside light. Steffie blinked at the sudden brightness.

"What do we do?" her mother asked.

"We get her out of here," Steffie said.

Her mother stared at her. "I'd like to take her."

"And what will you tell Dad?"

Her mother looked away.

"What is it?" Steffie asked. "Why is he so unwilling to let her grow up?"  
"I don't know," her mother whispered. But Steffie could tell she lied.

AFTER SHE LEFT HER MOTHER'S ROOM, SHE STOOD IN THE hallway for a moment. If she was going to back out, this was her only chance. Her only chance to escape the house, and never be seen again.

But KD's skeletal face would haunt her. KD's voice had, over the years, bemoaning Steffie's freedom, Steffie's size, Steffie's life. Steffie didn't sleep much as it was. She wouldn't be able to sleep at all if she abandoned KD now.

She opened the door to KD's room—and thought for a moment that KD had given her a reprieve.

The silence was odd. And almost terrifying. Then KD took a loud shuddery breath, and Steffie realized that her sister was still alive.

Steffie sat on the bed and touched her shoulder, much as she had touched her mother's.

KD's eyes opened immediately. "I thought you'd be gone," she said.

"I found someone to help you," Steffie said, a bit more rigidly than she had planned.

"Dr. Doom?" Then when Steffie frowned, KD added, "The guy who holds the patent?"

"You knew about him?"

"Sure. I know my way around the boards."

Steffie felt a trembling deep inside. Nothing changed. KD was playing her again, touching her sympathies and then throwing them back in her face.

"I spent hours searching for him," Steffie said, wondering how she managed to keep her voice so soft when all she wanted to do was scream at KD.

"Took me three days," KD said. "You are better than me."

"You could have saved me the time," Steffie said, "and just told me about him."

"Wouldn'ta worked," KD said. "You never believe anything you don't find on your own."

There was too much truth in that statement.

"We have a date to meet him," Steffie said. "And a place. Are you willing to go through with this?"

"I won't do it," KD said, "unless it allows me to grow."

"It's one of the side effects," Steffie said. "But you already knew that." KD smiled. "I already knew that."

"That's why you brought me here. Not to inform me of anything, but to take you to this man."

"Yes," KD said.

"Why? Mom would have taken you."

"No, she wouldn't," KD said. "I'm all she has left."

Steffie felt the world spin into place. She had left, run away. Her brothers and Liza were gone, too. Steffie had noted, on that family page, that none of them had been home in years either. Her parents' children grew up and went away, but they didn't just leave the nest—

They had abandoned it.

KD couldn't, not legally and not physically.

"I asked Mom to help me smuggle you out of here. Was that wrong?" KD shook her head. "Unlike Dad, Mom still has a sense of what's right. She only acts on it when pushed, but she can be pushed."

Somehow that didn't reassure Steffie. "How do I push her?"

KD smiled. "I think you already did."

STEFFIE SNEAKED AROUND THE HOUSE, PREPARING FOR THE TRIP. The first shuttle didn't leave until 6 A.M. She couldn't sleep, so she went through her own closet with an eye for cool. Most of the clothes brought back memories: the blue and white dress with the sailor collar that she had bought with her own money, the silk sweater that had been too hot for her first date, a pair of Levi's, true Levi's, that dated from the mid-1950s and were worth their weight in gold. She wondered how many other treasures she'd find in this house, old once-fashionable things that had been out of style so long that they

had become valuable antiques.

Probably nothing from the modern era would become an antique. Fashion came and went too quickly. It didn't have time to linger; the word antique was slowly beginning to mean something over a month old.

She chose an outfit from her closet to wear back to New York. The top was a pale peach tent shirt with a faint paisley pattern; the bottoms were a pair of brown gauze pants. She kept her boots—she couldn't walk far without them—but she tossed a pair of sandals into her stuff for safe keeping. She grabbed an old shoulder pouch, filled it, and slipped it over one arm. Then she pinned her hair on both sides of her head with matching ribbon barrettes.

For a day, at least, she wouldn't be Steffie Storm-Warring. She'd be KD's sister and the responsible adult for an important operation.

All they had to do was get out of the house before her father woke up.

Steffie had asked KD why their father didn't want her to charge, didn't want her to grow. Their father, more than their mother. And KD had looked at her with those old, old eyes in that still-young face. *Don't you see what a failure he is? I remind him of the days when the world still had possibilities.*

Steffie had been thinking about that statement since she had come to her old room. It rang something within her; it made an emotional kind of sense. It was hard for her to think of her father as a failure. He had a job, he had this wonderful home, and he had a family. But his job was inherited, a tenured position he had taken from his father at the University of Michigan. The house was inherited too, and paid for. It had never cost their family a dime to live inside. Her parents hadn't remodeled. They hadn't even bought new furniture, except for the children's rooms.

All they had spent money on was KD, and she had been a victory for a time. A fashionable statement, a symbol of wealth and power—look! we can stop time!—and a luxury.

But it got him nothing except a bitter woman in a child's body, a woman tied to him and his inadequate life forever. His family was in ruins; his wife no longer slept with him, his second-oldest daughter had run away the night before she graduated from high school, and the remaining children were gone, never to return.

When he died what would he have to show for his life but KD? She was the only stable thing in it.

KD, the house, and the job.

Only KD was his own. His very own.

Steffie stood. She didn't know what it felt like to have something of her own. She stopped, bought clothes when she needed them, and discarded them when she was done. The only things she owned were her names, her accounts, and her contacts.

Her brains.

And her eye.

Nothing else.

It was strange to return to this place of history and see clothes so old that she could remember the first time she wore them, remember being 14 and full of hope.

Even then she had sensed her parents' bitterness. Both of them, bitter at growing older, at living their lives like their parents had, at not stepping out of the confines of this simple house.

Much like KD.

Did their father want KD to be stuck here because he was?

She glanced at the room with its off-white walls and familiar cracks. She couldn't imagine what the past 15 years must have been like here, staying through the harsh winter, seeing the same people.

Watching KD remain the same.

Day after day after day.

Time passed and no one noticed.

No one noticed at all.

STEFFIE MADE HER WAY DOWN THE STAIRS LIKE SHE HAD AS A teenager on that last night, walking along the wooden sides, avoiding the creaks.

Her mother sat at the base of the steps, cradling KD in a blanket. KD was too large for her mother. Large and heavy, like any three-year-old. Big enough to walk on her own.

But KD could no longer do that.

For the first time, Steffie saw fear in her mother's eyes.

"She'd found this guy on her own," Steffie whispered.

"Stop," KD said.

"KD?" Her mother's voice held very real pain. "Is this true?"

Over the edge of her blanket, KD shot Steffie a killing look. "Yes," she said.

"Why didn't you tell me? I'd have taken you. We wouldn't've had to wait."

Steffie's mouth opened slightly. She hadn't expected this, her mother willing to do anything, even something vaguely illegal, to keep KD alive.

"Shh," KD said. "Dad will hear you."

But Steffie understood now. KD was using her father as a way not to answer the question. "Why did you wait?" Steffie asked.

KD closed her eyes. "You wouldn't have taken me, Mom. Dad would have stopped you."

Her mother put her head against KD's. "I want you to live."

"I know," KD said, in a resigned voice. "You want me to stay the same."

"Is that so wrong?" her mother asked.

KD didn't answer. Steffie couldn't. She cleared her throat.

"Do you want to call this off?" Steffie asked, her mouth suddenly dry, not knowing if she were addressing the question to her mother or her sister.

KD's eyes opened, large circles on her tiny face. "This is my only chance, Steffie," she said.

Steffie knew that. Their mother cradled KD closer. "We don't have much time," she said. "Your father will be down shortly after sun-up, wanting his coffee."

Like he had ever since Steffie could remember.

"All right," Steffie said, the knot in her stomach growing. "Let's go."

THE FAMILY HAD BOUGHT THEIR CAR BEFORE STEFFIE HAD BEEN born. It was an old gas model, its combustion system redesigned in the mid-aughts to accommodate new fuel regulations. Steffie's parents had kept the car in pristine condition; like KD its value came in preserving its appearance.

Their mother handed KD to Steffie, and climbed into the driver's seat. KD was heavier than Steffie expected, all dead weight and rubbery skin. No natural skin felt that way, as if it were made of stuffed plastic, but then nothing about KD was natural.

Steffie slipped into the passenger side, unwilling to put her sister in the special seat in the back. KD was so weak she could no longer sit on her own. No sense in even trying.

The drive to the shuttle stop on the quad would be short. But not as short as the shuttle ride itself. KD closed her eyes. Her face looked drawn. It had that translucent quality that Steffie had seen before only in the homeless who slept in the park.

The ones who were about to die.

Steffie shuddered. What had she gotten herself into? She felt absurdly giddy, found herself thinking that if she had been more accessible, her family would have found her sooner and she would have arrived before KD got so sick.

But much of KD's illness, all of it in fact, had been caused by KD herself. KD and her desire to be like everyone else. When she could never ever be.

Steffie looked down to see KD staring at her. KD smiled weakly. Steffie made herself smile back, even though she didn't want to. Even though she felt trapped, alone, and completely out of her depth.

Her mother backed the car up and drove the few short blocks to the university. The three of them traveled in silence. Amazing how, after being family, after not seeing each other, after facing such a crisis, they

still had nothing to say to one another. Since she returned they had never once asked Steffie about the particulars of her work, or even if she enjoyed her job. They didn't ask where she lived, if she had a lover, if she had children.

Everything was lost in the focus on KD.

As usual.

Her mother pulled the car into the shuttle parking area.

The shuttle was already on the ground, perched like a black bird in the quad, barely visible through the gap between the 40-year-old dorms. When the designers of the college had designed the space, they hadn't realized that all of the pleasant, green, parklike land would eventually be multipurposed: shuttle landing spots, aircurtainers, and regularly scheduled volleyball games between the students.

KD pushed herself up on her thin arms and stared at the shuttle. She coughed once, and swallowed hard, but not before Steffie saw blood.

"Looks like it's ready," their mother said.

Steffie looked at the new reddish tint to KD's lips. "You know," she said to her mother, "that there are no guarantees."

"I know," her mother said. She ran a hand over KD's thinning hair. "I'll miss you, baby."

"She means I might die, Mom," KD said. "She doesn't want you to blame her."

Their mother looked at Steffie over KD's head. It was too late; they already blamed her. They blamed her for leaving, for growing up, for being a different person than them. Her parents had kept KD the way they wanted her, and they couldn't do that with their other children.

Now Steffie was taking KD away.

Maybe forever.

"You could come with us, Mom," Steffie said. "You might get back before Dad even knows you're gone."

Her mother shook her head.

"KD could use the support."

"I don't need it," KD said. "This is an adventure."

"You go," her mother said. "Do what you can." Then she kissed KD on the top of her head, and pushed Steffie's arm. Away from her. Get out of the car, the movement said. There was no affection, no attempt at it. Steffie got out, cradling KD.

"KD," their mother said, and there was desperation in her voice. "I love you."

KD sighed silently. Steffie felt her body move. "I love you too, Mom," her words sweet, her tone in complete contradiction to the sudden tension in her body. "Thanks for being us here."

"We're going to miss the shuttle," Steffie said.

"Send us news," their mother said.

Steffie nodded and headed for the shuttle. She mounted the small ramp, punched her ticket code, and climbed inside without turning to wave goodbye. Steffie didn't want another look at her, or at the quad, or at Ann Arbor itself.

This time, as in the time before, she hoped she would never have to go back. If this treatment worked, KD could come home on her own.

If she chose to go home at all.

This shuttle had 25 seats and all but two were taken. New York was still a business hub, although not as important as it had once been, and more people were willing to take five minutes out of their day to head there first thing in the morning.

Steffie kept KD's head covered in the blanket, not wanting people to gawk at her older sister. Not wanting people to remember them.

Or her.

She slipped into one of the empty seats, only to have KD croak, "Window."

Steffie sighed and moved to the other seat. "You can't really see out of these things," she said. "They're only for being on the ground."

"Don't tell me any more," KD said. She eased out of the blanket, let-

kd ha  
dn't lived life at all.  
KD hadn't lived life

ting it fall aside, and peered out the window, looking, for the first time since Steffie returned, like the little girl she was meant to be. "You know all this stuff. I want to discover it."

The words were strong, but the voice wasn't. Steffie wondered how much the trip had already taken out of KD, and how much more there was to take.

One more passenger arrived and took a seat. Then the automatic straps buckled everybody into place, including KD, holding her against Steffie's chest. They took off.

Steffie closed her eyes, but she didn't really close. Five minutes wasn't long enough for an effective nap. Besides, it was hard with KD squirming on her lap, trying to see everything, trying to memorize everything, not afraid to show complete and total awe at her surroundings.

Steffie had never shown such awe, not even on her first shuttle ride. In those days, it had been too important for her to keep her own aura of cool, not to let anyone know that she was interested in something, frightened of something, enjoying something.

KD had no sense of propriety, no sense of how she appeared in public. Steffie guessed it didn't matter. People perceived KD as a child. She could get away with anything.

Except the things she wanted to get away with.

The shuttle landed on its own pad on top of Grand Central Station. Steffie cursed silently. She had forgotten to ask for a specific landing point, one closer to the address the doctor had given her. The restraints came off, and KD still leaned against her.

"Wow," KD whispered. "We're here?"

"Yes," Steffie replied. She'd need another aircab, and she'd have to decide how close she wanted to be let off. New York was difficult enough for those with strong constitutions; KD didn't have much strength left.

Steffie waited until the other passengers disembarked then she carried KD out. Her eyes were too bright, her cheeks had an unnatural flush, and she was looking around as if she had been invited to Heaven and was being given a tour by God Himself.

The landing platform was hot. Two more shuttles, probably from LA and Dallas, were resting nearby, passengers disembarking. A man, slender and tan, glanced at Steffie and smiled.

She did not smile back.

The crowd made her nervous. She didn't know how to be around a crowd when she wasn't coolhunting, when she wasn't working. She cradled KD close, and made her way to the aircab stand.

Five men in business suits complete with pocket watch/ computer/ phone attached to their ankle waists waited at the stand. Three women in platform shoes two feet high, and an elderly person whose gender Steffie couldn't identify, also waited. A woman in an official green uniform used a soundless whistle to summon the taxis.

If Steffie didn't gain her sympathy, they'd waste 10 minutes here.

She approached cautiously, then pulled the blanket down from KD's head. "Ma'am," Steffie said, doing her best to sound like she still was from Michigan. "My daughter—"

"Get in line!"

"Who do ya think you are?"

"We were here first!"

The shouts came from behind her. She knew then that she had a chance. Those people would not have yelled if they didn't already feel as if they had lost a position in line.

"My daughter is ill," Steffie said. "I'm trying to get her to a specialist."

The woman looked at both of them. KD was obviously ill. Steffie could see that reflected in the woman's eyes. "Shoulda told the shuttle to set you close."

"I didn't know you could," Steffie said.

The woman shook her head. Then she whistled for an aircab, held one of the large men back, and let Steffie and KD slide in.

"Thanks," KD said, voice a rasp.

"Get better," the woman said, and signaled to the taxi to move.

Steffie leaned back in the seat then gave the driver an address on the Lower East Side. He circled Grand Central and then took off as if an entire lot of police were after him.

KD watched from the comfort of Steffie's arms. "Is it always like this?" she asked.

"No," Steffie said. "Usually people aren't that friendly."

Then she realized that she didn't have to lie to KD. KD would never return here. She would never be a tourist alone on these mean streets. KD could know that New Yorkers generally were friendly. The problem was that you sometimes couldn't tell the friendly ones from the unfriendly ones.

"There's no trees," KD said.

"We're going the wrong way for trees," Steffie cradled her sister close. She had never expected KD to be here. Suddenly she felt as if KD were a three-year-old child, subject to all the horrors the city could present.

"And it's old. Those buildings are older than the ones in Ann Arbor."

"Dirtier too," Steffie said.

Her responses didn't diminish KD's enthusiasm. "I've never been in an aircab before."

Or on a shuttle.

Or in a state outside of Michigan.

Or in a city that was a world unto itself.

KD had never had sex, never held a job, never fallen in love. KD hadn't lived a life at all.

And she was dying.

"Why do they call him Dr. Doom?" Steffie asked, afraid of the answer.

For the first time, KD took her eyes off the city. She looked at Steffie, and she got a hint of what KD in an adult's body would look like. Beautiful, menacing, intimidating as hell.

"Because," KD. "No one ever comes back."

Steffie's stomach flopped. She was taking her sister to meet death. KD had known it all along.

"I can't do this," Steffie said.

"Sure you can," KD said. "He doesn't always kill people. A lot of them never return to their parents because they're cured. And big. They can have their own lives."

"I'm not liking what I hear," Steffie said.

"It's not your choice," KD said. But there was a bravado in her voice.

It was Steffie's choice. She was the legal adult even though she was the younger of the two. It was a fiction between them that KD had any control at all.

"You don't care what he does to you?" Steffie asked.

KD leaned against her. She was frowning visibly, the pallor of her skin glowing. "I care," KD said. "I care very much."

THE ADDRESS DR. DOOM HAD GIVEN HER WAS ON ONE OF THOSE narrow side streets with so many rules about aircabs that most avoided the place. The driver let them off on a corner, and Steffie walked the rest of the way.

KD was too tired to move. Once, when Steffie looked down at her, she had smiled weakly but she said nothing. When they reached the address, a man came out a steel doorway. He stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, and his gaze met Steffie's.

He seemed to know who they were, but then, how could he miss? How many other women walked through this part of the city with a three-year-old child—or someone who looked like one—in their arms?

"You're going to go through with this?" he asked, sounding almost disappointed.

"Yes," Steffie said.

He sighed and went to the door. "I am no miracle worker," he said.

DN'T lived life a tall.

a tall.

KD hadn't lived life a

He was looking at KD.

"They call you Dr. Doom," she said hoarsely.

For the first time, he smiled. It made him look younger, in his mid-forties, a cascade of laugh lines forming on his careworn face. "They do," he said. "And they are right."

THE FRONT PART OF HIS RENTED SPACE SERVED AS A RECEPTION area. From the makeshift kitchen in the corner and the ratty look of the couch, Steffie suspected it also doubled as his home. He never did give them his real name, although Steffie knew it. Instead, he led her to the back room, which looked shinier, newer, and cleaner than any hospital she had ever been in.

Now the doubts she had felt when she discovered him made sense. That had only been his screen persona, designed to scare away those who were not serious. This was not a man who taught at CUNY, who had exorbitant legal bills. This was a man who made a living off people like KD.

"The authorities know about me," he said. "They will have your E-mail by now."

"Then why don't they come for you?"

He smiled again. "They tried. But there is no law yet against saving lives, now is there? Only a lack of courage on the part of the government and the normal facilities."

"Do you save lives?" Steffie asked.

"Sometimes," he said. A man came out from a side room that Steffie hadn't even realized was there. This man was slender and younger than Steffie. He took KD from her and placed her on a steel table in the center of the room.

"There are no legal bills, are there?" Steffie asked.

Dr. Doom smiled at her. "There are always legal bills," he said. She no longer wanted to leave KD there. She no longer trusted him with KD, if she ever had.

KD was scanning the room, her small head turning.

"This is a mistake," Steffie said to her.

KD eased up on her elbows. The whites of her eyes were a dull yellow, and the blood was back in the corner of her mouth. "It's a chance, Steffie," she said. And then, with a last burst of strength, she added, "It's my choice."

Her choice.

Steffie crossed her arms. KD was right, no matter what the law said. It was her choice. And she had stated it over and over. If she had to remain the way she was, she would die. If there was no chance of change, there would be no survival.

"Can you help her?" Steffie asked.

Dr. Doom looked at her. His mouth was a thin line, his eyes wide. He did not have the blustery confidence that most doctors had.

"We can only try," he said.

URING THE OPERATION, SHE WENT OUTSIDE. THE DAY WAS sunny with a hint of muggy; the city smelled of garbage as it always did.

She was surprised to realize that she had missed it.

Spring was in full swing. Soon it would be summer.

Summer was her best time of year.

She sat down on a stoop at a nearby building, and brought her knees up to her chest. She wrapped her arms around them, trying to seek comfort from herself. What would she do with KD? If she died, then Steffie would have to take the body back to Ann Arbor, and admit to her parents that she had failed. She knew her mother would be upset, but she wasn't certain about her father. He hadn't wanted an adult KD, and he had already resigned himself to her death. He might simply accept it as a matter of course.

No. That seemed straightforward. It was what she would do if KD lived that bothered her.

Steffie had no apartment, and her job required her to move around a lot. To consistently be in a different place at a different time. She had enough credits stored away that she could quit working altogether, but

what was the point of that? Although she might have to, if she were responsible for KD.

At least Dr. Doom had guaranteed identification along with a successful surgery. Steffie wouldn't have to brave the underground bureaucracy for her sister. All she had to concentrate on was teaching KD how to live in the real world.

It would fall to her. Her parents would never do the job. They might even try to keep the adult KD as imprisoned in their home as they had the child.

Steffie would have to warn KD of that.

Steffie brushed a strand of hair out of her face. She no longer felt clean from that shower she'd had at her parents' home. That was one disadvantage of flopping. She allowed herself to look as if she had been sleeping on the street more often than not.

And sometimes she did.

Maybe KD would help her settle down. Maybe KD would slow her down. It wouldn't hurt. She was, she had to admit, lonelier than she had expected in this life on the road.

Going back home had shown her that.

A man passed her wearing tight black leather pants with their ankles tucked inside cowboy boots, a muscle T-shirt, and a derby. She had her palm out open before she knew it, and was recording. It didn't hurt to work. Not while she was waiting.

Not when Dr. Doom said it could take all day.

After she paid the dapper cowboy, she watched the street. It had been weeks since she'd been this far east in Manhattan. Fresh pickings of a kind she hadn't seen in a while. Fresh and bright. Something was changing here—an influx from somewhere, bringing, as it always did, new trends, new innovations, new ways to be original.

With Steffie around, they wouldn't be original for long.

She saw and rejected a woman with long green hair and a yellow rain slicker tied over her breasts, her tattooed stomach bare, and her hips barely covered in a matching yellow skirt. She hesitated over a man in the traditional garb of Scotland, complete with kilt. She had never seen such a thing outside of history shots. But it was too by-the-book, and that made it retro but not original. Real retro took the style and updated it to the moment.

She had just finished catching her second big strike—a woman in white satin, a simple flowing dress that flared at the hips and crossed over her breasts. The back was cut all the way down to her buttocks, and in her hair she wore a matching white ribbon. The look was cool, casual, and completely unself-conscious—when Dr. Doom opened his door.

Actually, Dr. Doom didn't. His assistant did. He saw her flip a plastic at the satin woman, and looked away as if he had witnessed a drug deal.

"We're ready for you," he said.

THE LIGHTS WERE STILL BRIGHT IN THAT STEEFLE ROOM, BUT THE smell was different. The air was fresher as if each molecule had been personally scrubbed. A woman lay on the makeshift bed, a sheet pulled up to her chin. She was as tall as Steffie, and nearly as thin.

The assistant put his hand on her shoulder. "Don't be shocked," he said.

How could Steffie be shocked? The operation was successful. Her older sister looked older, for the first time since Steffie turned three.

She walked up to KD and paused, her heart making a sudden lurch. This was what he was talking about. Not KD's size, but her face.

The skin was lumpy and mottled, broken as if it had tried to go through puberty in the space of a single afternoon. Which, she supposed, it had. KD's nose was truncated, her eyes suddenly small and puffy. Lines formed around her mouth, making it look sad and sour.

She was asleep.

Mercifully.

She didn't have to see Steffie's reaction.

"It's a side effect." The voice belonged to Dr. Doom. She hadn't seen him when she had come in but he had been there, against the wall, gauging her reaction. "The problem is that all her organs look like that. The

damage is as obvious and as hard to repair."

"This is why the government shut you down," Steffie whispered.

"Yes," he said. "I can keep them alive, I can make them grow up, but I can't make them pretty. And people who do this to their kids expect pretty."

"How long does she have?" Steffie whispered.

"Years," he said. "And then, one day, something will shut down. But it was bound to happen. Her lifespan was shortened the moment she took those hormones."

Steffie was shaking. She sat on the bed and took KD's hand. It was long and slender, with fingers that curved inward, just like Steffie's. Only unlike Steffie's the skin on KD's hands was red and cracked, angry-looking, as if she'd kept them in hot water for days.

"She looks like this all over?" Steffie asked.

"Yes," he said.

Her mouth was dry. Maybe he was trying to extort more money from her.

It was working.

"Plastic surgery —"

"Isn't an option. The damage is cellular, and skin sloughs off, regrowing itself, regrowing the damage."

"But you work on the cellular level," Steffie said.

"And this is the best I've been able to do." His eyes were intense in his handsome face. "I wouldn't leave her like this if I had a choice. Believe me."

"She's not going to be happy," Steffie said softly.

"She's alive," Dr. Doom said. "She's an adult. She'll be happy."

Steffie clutched her sister's hand tightly in her own. "I hope you're right," she said.



HE ASSISTANT GAVE HER A BLANKET AND A PILLOW, and rolled out a cot for her. She spent the night on it, her sleep shallow, any little noise waking her up. She kept expecting KD to return to consciousness, but she didn't. She had a lot to recover from. Dr. Doom explained, and she needed the rest.

He could have awakened KD at any point that night or the following day, but he did not. He let her sleep. He let her heal. Steffie had no choice but to

sleep, and to brood.

She didn't want to leave KD's side, didn't want her sister—her frail older sister—to awaken alone and frightened. Steffie kept telling herself she would do this for anyone, but she knew the very thought was a lie. She wouldn't do this for anyone.

She was surprising herself by doing it for KD. She didn't know if it was residual guilt, or if there was actually affection buried beneath all the anger, all the hurt, all the past.

When she did sleep, though, she dreamed of KD, the little girl, when she had been truly a little girl, and remembered all the times they laughed, all the days they huddled in each other's rooms, playing and enjoying each other's company.

Before Steffie got bigger. And KD didn't.

Now KD was big, but still flawed, and perhaps that was the other reason Steffie stayed. KD had hoped for a normal life.

And she would never have one.

On the morning of the second day, KD stirred. Steffie climbed off her cot and went to KD's side, suddenly conscious of the fact that she hadn't showered or changed clothes since she brought KD in.

KD's eyes fluttered, and a door opened beside her. Dr. Doom entered. He had probably been monitoring her from his private room.

KD's eyes opened. She looked at Dr. Doom, then at Steffie. "It worked?" she whispered. Her voice was a raspy croak but it was a deep raspy croak, the kind of woman's voice that made an alto sound as if she were singing first soprano. When KD realized it had come out of her, she giggled, a typical KD giggle, only deeper.

"I guess it did," she said, sitting up.

Dr. Doom was standing near Steffie. He put his hand on KD's shoulder. "There's a few things you should know," he said.

KD's gaze went from him to Steffie. Steffie did not smile, on purpose. KD frowned slightly.

"Look at your hands," Steffie said.

KD did. The frown grew deeper. She stroked the back of the left with the long fingers of the right, then turned her left hand over as if it belonged to a stranger.

"The skin condition is permanent," Dr. Doom said. "And disfiguring. We can't do anything about it."

"How tall am I?" KD asked.

Dr. Doom took a deep breath, then smiled a little. The question shocked Steffie. "I don't know without you standing," he said. "I would guess about five-seven."

"Five-seven," KD said, raising her strange, small eyes to Steffie. The eyes, even though they were small, still had KD in them. "I'm taller than you."

"Yes," Steffie said.

"I've never been taller than you."

"KD," Steffie said. "The skin —"

"Is disfiguring, yes, I know," KD said. "But it won't interfere with my life, will it?"

That last she addressed to Dr. Doom.

"People will stare at you. They will notice. They will not be kind."

KD shrugged. "That's my whole life," she said. "What else?"

"Your other organs are as damaged. You may not live a normal life span."

KD grinned. "I come back from the jaws of death an adult, and you're worried about whether I'll live to 50? I'm just glad I have tomorrow."

Steffie felt a strange tension in her shoulders. She had expected anger, screaming, tears, but she had never expected this calm acceptance, never figured that KD would take it all in stride.

"You knew," Steffie said. "You knew this was going to happen."

KD looked at her blankly, as if she couldn't understand the emotion that threatened through Steffie's voice. "I told you I read everything. And I had a long time to think about it. What would you rather have? Your freedom, your adulthood, or a pretty face? I had a pretty face for a long, long time. It didn't get me anywhere."

All that worry. All that agonizing. And KD was more prepared than Steffie gave her credit for. Steffie never really had trusted KD, never really had believed that there was an adult mind inside that child's body. She played to everyone's prejudices so well.

"So, when can I go free?" KD asked Dr. Doom.

"As soon as we do a few tests," he said.

THE TESTS TOOK FOUR HOURS. STEFFIE HAD TO WAIT IN A ROOM she had not seen before while they were under way. When they were over, she went back into the room where she had slept and worried and stayed longer than any other place in New York.

The assistant had KD's new identification on a tray. Steffie looked it over, and realized that it not only looked authentic; it was authentic. The assistant had used KD's real birth records and put the factual information along with her vital statistics—height, weight, scars and distinguishing marks, and a hologram of her actual appearance. Adult identification, for a woman who had been on the Earth longer than Steffie had.

KD was sitting on the bed when Steffie entered, a series of chip monitors still attached to her left arm.

"We're nearly done," Dr. Doom said, and he sounded cheerful.

"Can we talk while you work?"

"Certainly," he said. "You should be happy to know she's turned out well. I expect great things of her."

KD smiled at him—the KD smile on that ravaged face.

"KD," Steffie said. "When we leave here, we need to deal with Mom and Dad. I could book you —"

"No," KD said. The smile left her face. It was suddenly blank. "I don't want to see them."

"But they'll want to know —"

"You tell them."

"All right," Steffie said, feeling out of her depth. KD was speaking with an anger foreign to Steffie. KD had always had anger, but not

force behind it.

Not the force of a grown woman.

"We can decide that after we find a place," Steffie said. "I know a few apartments not far from here. They're large and not too expensive, and we'll each have our own entrances—"

"No," KD said again. Her eyes narrowed. "You don't get it, Steffie. I'm done with all of you. I'm an adult now. I can do this on my own."

"I know," Steffie said. "But I thought—"

"You thought I'd need some protection in the big city. You thought I'd need to learn how to live. Well, I don't," KD said. She looked up at Dr. Doom. "We don't need her any more, do we?"

He glanced at Steffie. His expression was apologetic. "No," he said to KD. "You're an adult now. Legally. You can sign everything."

"Then that's it," KD said. "I'm sorry, Steffie. I know this was an inconvenience."

Steffie froze. What was KD doing? "Yeah," she said. "Yeah it was."

"Well, thanks," KD said. "I do appreciate it."

"That's obvious," Steffie snapped. Her initial feeling had been right. She had been manipulated.

Again.

KD had not been able to get anyone else to bring her to Dr. Doom. She made Steffie do it.

She manipulated her.

Masterfully.

KD pursed her lips. "There's no need to get upset. You've been moving on with your life a long time now. Just move past this one."

Steffie stared at her. It was an apt description. She had been moving, constantly moving, and mostly because of KD. And when she finally stopped, KD didn't want her. Didn't need her any more.

If she actually had needed Steffie, in the first place. Or if any adult would have done just as well.

"What do I tell Mom and Dad?" Steffie asked.

"Tell them I'm dead," KD was watching her out of that mockery of a face, the cracked and damaged skin twisting as she raised her eyebrows in typical KD you'd-better-believe-me fashion.

"I can't do that," Steffie said.

KD shrugged. "Then they'll always wonder."

"KD, you should go back home. Or call them. Or something. You owe them that much," Steffie couldn't believe she was arguing for her parents. She couldn't believe that KD had put her in that position. She couldn't believe that anyone could put her in that position.

"Owe them?" KD's voice was unusually soft. Dr. Doom had stepped away from her slightly. The assistant was standing beside the door, holding Steffie's pouch. "I owe them? For what? Holding me prisoner all these years? Do you know what it's like, having an adult brain and not being allowed to use it? Do you know how many times I ran away, only to be returned to them like a lost puppy? Do you know how many times I begged to be let out of that house? No, Steffie. I don't owe them anything."

Steffie swallowed. She saw the hints around her, the signals from Dr. Doom and his assistant that she should leave.

She chose to ignore them.

"They loved you, in their own way."

"They loved a beautiful three-year-old doll they called KD because the name they had originally given her—before they decided to alter her—didn't suit a child," KD looked at her identification, then grinned at Dr. Doom.

"At least you got the name right," she said to him.

Steffie didn't have to look. She knew.

Kathanna Dunita.

KD was right. The name was pretentious for a child, but it was suited to a woman, particularly a woman whose face had character and whose spirit natched.

"KD," Steffie said. "I've been on my own for a long time. At least let me help you start out."

"So that you can take the first opportunity to contact Mom and Dad?" KD shook her head. "Sorry, Steffie."

"KD," Steffie said, knowing she was losing this, but having to try. "I won't contact them. It's just not easy out there. No matter what you think. No matter what you know."

KD's face went blank. "And you're an expert on this?"

"Actually, I am."

"Then maybe I will be too." She crossed her arms, and frowned. KD's frowns had been imposing as a child. They were twice as imposing on her adult face.

"You don't get it, Steffie," she said. "I don't want you around any more than I want Mom and Dad. I'm done with the family. I've done my time. I'm finished now."

"KD," Steffie said. "You're never done."

"You were," KD said.

"Until you brought me back."

"You thought I was dying."

Steffie shrugged. "You were. I helped."

"We're even," KD tilted her head back slightly. "Now get out."

"KD—"

"Get out."

Steffie stood there for a moment, unable to think. Unable to move. Then the assistant put his hand on her arm.

"Sorry," he said.

She glanced at KD, somehow thinking KD would change her mind, would be different.

But she wasn't even looking at Steffie.

It was as if Steffie were already gone.

Then the assistant tugged on Steffie's arm. She let him show her out.

At the main door, he stopped. "I'm sorry," he said softly. "I've seen them do that before. I think it's part of the process. They've been objects for so long, they don't realize when they're treating someone else the same way."

Steffie smiled at him, not really feeling any emotion behind the facial movement. Maybe he was right for other grown-up "children." Maybe. But for KD, it was merely her chance to act as the rest of the family had. To cut all ties, to make her own way.

Only her method had to be more drastic because her life had been so different.

"Do you contact the parents?" Steffie asked, knowing it was a cowardly question.

"No," he said.

She sighed. "I didn't think so," she said, and walked away.

**S**HE WALKED TO CENTRAL PARK. IT WAS, AFTER ALL, THE CLOSEST thing she had to a home in the city. She didn't count on the way; she didn't even look at her surroundings. She could have been followed, she could have been mugged, but she didn't care.

She didn't quite understand what had happened to her, how she had suddenly lost her identity, had become KD's big little sister all over again.

Or maybe that identity never went away. Maybe she had buried it under years of running, years of hunting, years of flopping wherever time and the need took her.

She didn't like the way it had popped back up, the way it had opened her up to feelings like those she hadn't experienced since she was a girl.

Betrayal.

How could she feel betrayed by KD, when all KD had been trying to do was survive?

hen they'll always wonder."

"Then they'll always wonder"



To have a life like Steffie did.  
After all, KD was right.  
Steffie had run out on her first.  
And it had taken KD a long time to find her.  
Was it revenge, then? Was that what KD had done? Or was it something less conscious, a simple action that had spiraled into something else?

Or maybe it was a combination, a simple action that became revenge. Because KD knew, perhaps better than Steffie, that only a member of the family could have gotten her out of that house.

Steffie managed.  
And now KD had her wish.  
Steffie walked to her favorite bench and sat down. She had slept more in the past two days than she had slept in a long time, and yet she felt exhausted. Bone-deep weary. So tired she didn't want to hurt. So tired she couldn't even decide what to do next.

A woman walked by wearing a pale peach tent shirt in a faux paisley pattern, brown gauze pants, and ribbon barrettes pulling her hair from her face. In her arms, she carried a small child wrapped in a blanket.

Steffie froze.  
The woman wore boots just like the ones Steffie had on.  
Only newer.  
Steffie's ribbon barrettes were long gone, and her tent shirt was wrinkled beyond recognition. The brown pants were stained and ripped slightly from their odyssey the past two days.

Only Steffie knew the woman wore the same outfit Steffie did.  
She sat still, holding her breath, scanning the park.  
She saw a lot of people all going about their own business. None of them were looking at her.

Slowly she let her breath out, and as she did, she saw another young mother carrying a blanket-wrapped child. Her ribbon barrettes did not match, nor did she have on the right boots.

Steffie resisted the urge to stand on her bench. She looked, more carefully this time, at the people on the paths, walking through the grass, sitting on the grass. Young couples, babies in carriers, bicyclists—  
—and two more young women wearing her outfit, complete with child.

A male version walked past only moments later, the same except that he wore no ribbons in his short hair.

Not early adapters then. The style had been on the market long enough to be mass produced, long enough to be modified.

Someone had seen her the moment she got off the shuttle with KD, and had cooed her. And had shown no class by not identifying himself, and by not paying her.

She was shaking. It wasn't the lack of money that bothered her. She had enough money. Nor was it even being cooed. It was bound to happen eventually. She had the right attitude, a focus on something else, with the clothes being secondary, but interesting.

No. None of those things disturbed her at all.  
It was the lack of understanding.

She had been cooed at the most important moment of her life, and the marketing had got it all wrong, selling it to parents as a way of looking cool while carrying their child.

For her it had been a matter of life and death.  
It had been the central moment of her adulthood. Everything crossed there—her childhood, her feelings about KD, and her future.

More than anything, her future.  
She'd been willing to change it all for KD.  
Steffie let out a small moan.

What was she going to do? Ignore it all and return to coohunting, only to get it wrong like the person who had hunted her? How many people had she insulted, how many precious moments had she misunderstood? How much cool had simply been one of life's disasters

proceeding in front of her, the trend-setter simply someone who had put on anything from his closet that day because he hadn't had time to think?

How many moments had she touched, and got wrong?  
She stood, hand to her face. She couldn't go back to coohunting. Coohunting was the very thing that led to KD—to KD's imprisonment, to her life, to her rejection of everything she had known. What kind of person would KD have been if she had been allowed to develop normally?

Like Steffie.  
"You all right, ma'am?" a woman asked. She was standing some distance away, as if she might catch something from Steffie if she got too close. But the woman had an expression on her face that implied that she had to ask, that she wouldn't have been able to live with herself if she hadn't.

No one had looked at her like that in a long, long time.  
"I'm fine," Steffie said, doing her best to look normal, given her filthy clothing, her agitated state. "Really. Thank you."

The woman nodded, obviously not convinced, but not willing to argue. She continued down the path.

Steffie watched her go. What had the woman seen? A disheveled woman who lived on the streets? A woman who had just given her privacy to her sister, only to have the gift rejected?

Or a woman who looked lost, like Steffie felt?  
For the first time in her life, she had nothing to run away from. Everything had run away from her.

Not even her mother pretended politeness any more. When they parted, her mother spoke words of love only to KD.

Steffie groaned again. Her mother expected news of her sister, and KD certainly wasn't going to tell her.

Steffie couldn't just E-mail her. She couldn't just say that KD was dead.

And she couldn't ignore it and leave those two people alone together in that house. No matter what they'd done.

Or what she thought they'd done.  
Maybe she had been wrong about them, too.

Maybe she hadn't understood their motives any better than she'd understood her own.

She put her hand back to her mouth, knowing her decision was made. She wasn't going to stay in Ann Arbor. She would take an afternoon shuttle there, and an evening shuttle back. And then she would get an apartment on Fifth Avenue with a view of the park.

And invest, maybe, or fashion gamble. She'd be good at that. Better than KD was.

And maybe playing on-line, she might even find KD.  
Maybe.

But she doubted it.  
To find someone, one had to be looking.  
Her hunting days were over.

It was time to look beneath the surfaces to see what lurked in the depths.

And the first place she'd look was the last place anyone would expect her to look. Home.

To see what she had missed.  
To see what the place was like without KD.

To take responsibility, for the first time, for her own actions.  
She had rescued KD. She had brought change to that house.  
Now she had to take it the last step.

Now she had to let her parents know that they could move forward, whether they wanted to or not.

She closed her eyes. Funny how she was always the one bringing change.

And she had finally brought it, to herself. □

"Then they'll always wonder."

WHEN THE ALIENS

I was mowing the front lawn that Saturday afternoon when my cell phone purred. I stopped

THE

the engine to answer, and heard a voice that almost stopped my heart.

ARRIVED, THEY MADE US

"Clint? It's Talimena, remember?"

PURCHASE

I gulped and asked where she had been.

AN OFFER

"A dynamite story," she said. "But not one for the phone. If you want to hear it, pick me up at

OF EARTH

the municipal airport."

WE COULDN'T REFUSE.

I asked when.

BY JACK WILLIAMSON



"I'm here now," she said. "Getting my flyer secured."

I left the mower where it was and drove fast to the Canyon airport, memories of Tallmena Whiteheart bubbling in my mind. She liked to brag of her Cherokee blood, though with her long dark eyes and thick black hair she looked more Spanish. My life had never been the same since we met. I was begging her to marry me the night she disappeared.

We'd been out to dance at La Loba, the hottest spot in Amarillo. She gave me a kiss that took my breath when we got to her apartment well past midnight, but wouldn't let me in. Next morning she was gone.

Her place was left locked and empty, with no sign of violence. She'd left no note, no hint of trouble, no word of any plans except to let me pick her up for work next morning because her red convertible was in the shop.

Nearly two years ago, and a dreadful time for me. Months of search turned up nothing. The cops gave me a rough interrogation. Her father suspected me of some foul play when he came from Oklahoma to clear out her apartment and take her car. I hadn't tried to find anybody else.

Recalling all her wild, happy, indomitable splendor, I had a ticket for speeding before I reached the airport. I saw her flyer from the parking lot. A queer craft, it was a mirror-bright silver bubble without wheels or wings. Yellow tape was stretched around it and a uniformed security officer was shouting to hold back a curious crowd.

She ran out to meet me, a total stranger till she spoke. Her garment was a sort of sari, a filmy fabric that looked like spun silver. She looked taller, her fine skin shining as if dusted with gold. Her hair clipped short, she wore a golden band around it with a huge, green-glowing gem on her forehead.

I was still staring, speechless, till her arms went around me. She kissed me on the mouth and her husky laugh at my befuddlement brought her old enchantment back. I caught her shoulders to see her better and asked again where she had been.

"Tomorrow." She laughed again. "You wouldn't believe it if I told you. What I want now is a rare beef-steak." Bare and bright under the sheer sari, her arms slid back to hold me close. I asked an odd, keenly sweet aroma. "I'm hungrier," she whispered, "for a night with you."

Her blunt candor astonished me again. We'd spent nights together, nights that kept me enslaved, but only when she was in the mood and drunk enough, and had time from her career. We'd been together on the Amarillo American, I on the city desk, she as fashion editor and producer of a TV fashion series. She refused to think of marriage; career came first.

I let her drive my car; she'd always loved to drive. Pulling out of the parking lot, we passed her shining flyer again and the gazing crowd around it.

"It actually flies?" I asked. "With no wings?"

"No wings." My wonder amused her. "And I've stranger things to show you." One hand on the wheel, she slid the other arm around me. "But not tonight."

"Your disappearance?" Curiosity gnawed me. "It baffled the cops and got me suspected of doing you in. Can't you tell me anything?"

"Simple enough." She made a willowy shrug and drew me closer. "They'd seen me on TV and mailed an offer. They phoned that night and sent a taxi to pick me up."

"They?"

"They." Her soft laugh mocked me. "You'll be meeting them tomorrow."

At La Loba she devoured a rare sirloin, and finished mine. The salted margaritas made her drunk enough. She let me drive us to the Pioneer, where she had phoned for her reservation. The sari came off as I shut the door, and that night with her was one I hope I don't forget.

Awake next morning before she was, I showered, dressed, and

turned the TV on, volume low. Watching, I forgot everything. An unknown object had appeared in the sky northwest of Amarillo. Something bigger and blacker than a storm cloud, so a rancher reported. Panic had spread from its shadow. Church services were canceled. The state police had ordered the whole county evacuated. A military aircraft from the Cannon Air Base in New Mexico had lost power and gone down, though the pilot glided away and ejected safely. A better description had come from the pilot of a spy plane that flew high above it.

"Biggest damn thing I ever saw." He looked jittery. "God knows what keeps it up or what it is or where it came from."

What his photos showed was a thick disk rather than any saucer shape. "At least a mile across," he said. "Maybe five hundred feet tall." Flat on top, it had a tall dome in the middle and strange structures towering all around the rim.

"I might have landed on it," he said. "If I'd dared."

Tallmena woke, enchantingly nude. She glanced at the screen, waved a kiss at me, and went on to the bathroom.

"That thing?" I called after her. "You know what it is?"

"You'll see it," she said. "But first things first."

I sat riveted to the news till she came back, still sleek and dripping from the shower, to snap the TV off and help me strip. The gold dust had not washed off. Back in bed with her, I was impatient for half a minute, till her own electric wonder overwhelmed the wonder in the sky.

Afterward, again a dangerous stranger in the silver sari and that great jewel glowing on her forehead, she awoke me into silence on the way down to breakfast. Service was slow, even with only a handful of people in the dining room.

"The cook went home to be with his family," a badly rattled waitress told us. "The manager's in the kitchen."

The other diners stared at Tallmena till the waitress turned a TV on. A breathless announcer was stammering his story of that enormous object sinking slowly lower as he ran clips of men on horseback herding cattle out from under it. A calmer voice came on.

"People used to laugh at the SETI fanatics, keeping their radio dishes cocked for voices they never heard from outer space, but a White House spokesman has now confirmed that the incredible object now on the ground in the Texas panhandle, is in fact a gigantic spacecraft."

The state department has issued a white paper documenting that radio and TV contact has been established. The aliens are not quite human, but they do display humanoid characteristics. They claim to have come from a distant base to welcome Earth into what they call their united galaxy.

"They have invited government officials to come aboard to meet their leaders. President McMillan has been with his cabinet since midnight, and the Congress is now in emergency session. Delegations from Washington and the Texas state government are on their way."

"Updates—"

"Turn the damn thing off!" Tallmena shouted at the little group standing around the TV. "That's enough for now."

A fat man turned to scowl at her, his mouth yawning to protest. "Sit down." Her voice rose commandingly. The jewel was flashing blue. "Let's get on with breakfast."

He sat down.

Our first waitress had disappeared, but a flustered girl replaced her. Tallmena ordered ham and eggs, which she attacked with an eager appetite.

"They did feed me well," she spoke between bites, "but it's nice to be back to things I always loved."

I had orange juice and coffee, and forgot them.

"Don't take it so hard," she tried to cheer me. "They're absolutely



wonderful. You'll love them when you get to know them. The changes may seem difficult at first, but they've come to save us from ourselves."

"Can't you tell me?"

She laughed at me and nodded.

"I guess I've teased you long enough. They're the Su'kyan. An expansive race. They've colonized five hundred planets in our galactic sector. We're in great good luck to be next on the list."

"Su'kyan?"

She laughed at my effort to say the name, with its gliding tones and an odd click in the middle. She said it again, correcting me.

"A lovely language! They have perfect pitch, and the tones change to turn every word into music. Not that you'll ever speak it well. Not without the surgery I had to correct the human anatomy. With practice, though, you can get by."

She stood up to stop my questions and had me drive her back to the airport. I stopped in the terminal door to let her out.

"Fare," she said. "Come aboard the station with me."

She tipped the security guard with a crisp new hundred-dollar bill. He took the yellow tape from around her silver teardrop. A door dinged in the side of it. She beckoned me in and nestled into the seat beside me. From inside, its shell was transparent as glass. I saw no controls, but the jewel shimmered on her forehead and the field fell silently away. I dared another question.

"Without wings, how does it fly?"

"Antigravity." A simious, carefree shrug. "Back at the base, I heard a lecture on antigravity propulsion and how it collapses space-time for interstellar jumps. Nothing I understood, but I've seen it work."

I asked about the syndicate base.

"Far off, toward Orion. I had the agent show me our sun from there. So dim I could barely make it out."

My head whirling, I found no nerve to ask for more about the syndicate. The teardrop carried us so high that the sky turned darkly purple, then down again toward the arid Texas prairie, where the station shone under the morning sun like an impossibly vast silver coin.

"Big, isn't it?" She pointed, marveling like a child. "The new capital of Earth!"

She landed us on it, near the central dome. I followed her out, blinking at titanic strange constructions all around us. The oval door in the little teardrop shrank shut, and it took itself silently away toward something like a hangar at the edge of the deck. I saw half a dozen helicopters lined up there, three with American military markings. Human figure were leaving the others, hugging tripods and cameras.

"Network people," she said. "Invited aboard to broadcast a historic event. We're lucky to be here."

Terrified into silence, I stood watching, trying to imagine what the aliens meant for us, till her jewel burned blue. An arched doorway was opening in the silvery dome. She led me up a ramp toward a platform below it. People were appearing there.

People? I squinted against the sun to see them.

"They look human." Dazed, I spoke to myself. "Almost."

"Of course," she nodded. "Though maybe not quite so human as they look. Galactic citizens differ a lot. The syndicate is a Su'kyan project. They try to pick worlds where the natives resemble them. It's pretty necessary, if we're going to live together."

I followed her up a ramp, but she stopped me at the top and went on to the aliens. Lean handsome beings, gold-dusted like she was, the full-busted women as tall as the men, all scantily clad in a rain-bow of saris.

"Ty'roon"

SHE CALLED THE LEADER'S NAME AND RAN TO MEET HIM.

Smiling an almost human smile, he sang something that must have been a greeting, caught her in his gold-dusted arms, and thrust out a longscarlet tongue to lick her nose. She looked up to lick his, caught his arm and led him toward me. I didn't get their words, but he smiled again and leaned to crush my hand in a double-thumbed grip.

The camera crews were climbing the ramp. A party of humans came behind, staring at everything around them. I recognized the governor

of Texas, a rawboned man in alligator boots and a high white hat, almost as tall as Ty'roon. Tallimena introduced Ty'roon to a thin little bird man in a pin-stripe suit, the American Secretary of State.

The film crews bustled to arrange them in two groups, aliens facing humans, Ty'roon and Tallimena standing between them. Ty'roon addressed the human leaders, his voice rising and falling in what really was a sort of eerie music, the huge gem on his forehead shimmering in time to it. Tallimena translated.

"I speak to the people of Earth." Her jewel was blazing, and her pealing voice was strange with his alien accent. "You will soon know me well. I am Ty'roon AK'narth, Agent of Earth. I inform you now that your planet has been purchased by the Ninth Sector Syndicate, which is duly chartered under the laws of the Galactic Union. As the agent of the syndicate, answering only to them, I am vested with full authority on all matters related to the planet Earth."

He spoke again, while Tallimena listened. A man with a still camera crept warily forward, lights flashing. The statesmen were stricken dumb till the secretary grabbed for his muffled cell phone.

"You have no grounds for concern." Ty'roon had fallen silent, and Tallimena translated again. "Instead, we bring you cause for great rejoicing. Our surveys have found your planet utterly dysfunctional. You suffer from genocidal warfare. Terrorism unrestrained. Economic breakdowns. Famines and diseases. You've abandoned your religions and forgotten your ethics. You've lost faith even in your own primitive technologies. You've fallen close to race suicide."

Empty excuses, I thought. Propaganda designed to cover the invasion. The governor scowled at Ty'roon and muttered at the secretary.

"We bring your salvation," Tallimena's accents echoed the invader's lilt. "We welcome you into galactic civilization. We bring you a new age of world harmony and peace, world security, liberation from your crippling barbarism."

Pale and quivering with panic, the secretary shripped into his cell phone. The governor grew louder, red in the face and yelling at Ty'roon.

"You say you own us?" He clenched fist lifted. "What the hell does that mean?"

"The agent means exactly what he says," Tallimena answered blandly. "Existing authorities may remain in place, at least for now, so long as they are faithful to the syndicate."

"How the blazing hell—"

The agent sang louder, his gem blazing red. Tallimena spoke when he paused, smiling benignly at the apoplectic governor.

"He begs you to understand our landing as a rescue mission. The scouts reported fatal failings in your social system, especially your dependence on disease, war, and famine to control your alarming population overgrowth. Agent Ty'roon promises to end your suicidal warfare, to rid the planet of crime and terror, to control disease, to provide masses of your people with useful employment, adequate housing, nutrition, and sanitation. In short, to insure the survival of your race."

The secretary pushed his cell phone at an aide.

"Mr. Ty'roon—" The name came out as a squeaky stammer, and he tried again. "Ty'roon. I have conferred with our national leaders in Washington. Our government regards your unwelcome landing here as a violation of American territory. We demand the immediate removal of your craft and yourselves."

Tallimena translated and sang the answer.

"Your words have been heard. Your insolence is forgiven, but your request is denied."

The secretary gabbled at his cell phone and shoved it back at the aide. He had to look up to the agent.

"President McMillan requires—" His voice became a husky squeak. He gulped and resumed, "requires your departure within twelve hours, Earth time, under pain of military action."

"Your words are heard," Tallimena crooned again. "Agent Ty'roon advises that your primitive armaments offer us no credible threat. He begs you to avoid any reckless action that might result in destruction or loss of life to your own people."

"The hell he says!" the governor exploded. "Tell the bastard!"

The agent was turning away.

"He has concluded the audience," Talimena raised a shining hand to silence the governor and turned to the secretary. "Your government will be informed when he has further orders."

Ty'roon and his party went back into the dome. The secretary and the governor huddled with their aides and led them back down the ramp. The camera crews gathered their equipment and followed, trying to contain my own boiling emotion, I stood watching with Talimena till the helicopters had stuttered into the air.

"A great event, don't you think?" Elatlon lifted her voice. "A privilege to see."

"You—" I gulped back the words I wanted to use. "Traitor! You've sold us out. Sold your soul. Get me out of here."

"I'm sorry, Clint." The jewel had dimmed, and her regret seemed sincere. "Though I guess you've had no time to understand. If you left the station now, you'd be dead in a week."

"Huh?" Her solemn tone had chilled me. "Dead?"

"The Su'kyan carry malignant viruses and bacteria they've picked up on a hundred planets. Harmless to them, because they've developed immunities and vaccines. It's their nanoform vaccines that give us the golden tint."

"To you, however—"

"I don't care," I wanted to strike her. "I'll take my chances."

"Do you want to die?"

The question turned the cyclopean structures and machines that towered all around me into a nightmare jungle, the busy aliens to a swarm of malignant yellow insects, turned Talimena to the demon priestess who had conjured up the vision. For a moment it seemed too dreadful to be real, but it refused to go away. I took a long breath and said I didn't want to die.

"I hope you don't," I cringed from the arm she draped around me. "You'll have to stay aboard for your inoculations. They will take several days."

Helpless, I let her take me down into the station and on through lofty hallways floored with moving walks that glowed in varied colors to show where they led. The elevators were simply pits with zero gravity, where she took my hand and controlled our motion with the shimmer of her jewel. Her suite was huge, its furnishings so strange I felt afraid to touch anything.

She laughed at my dread.

"Don't mind the Su'kyan," she said. "You'll find them gentle and generous," she said. "Certainly to their friends."

She gave me a kind of chair that shaped itself to fit me and controlled my weight with a twisted knob. She got me a drink that came through a little window that opened in the wall. Something blood-red and tangily sweet. A bracer I needed.

"Why are they here?" I asked when my wits had begun to recover. "What are they going to do with us?"

"Ty'roon's a planner." Her own drink came out of the wall. "Here's to the future!" She clinked her glass against mine. "The new future of Earth!"

Uneasily, I asked what it would be.

"Ty'roon's an entrepreneur. He's making a place for Earth in the complex trading system of the sector. Its future will be agricultural. He has studied the climate and the soils and the native crops. His grand economic plan for the planet may surprise you."

She sipped her drink and let me wait.

"Marijuana," she said. "Cocaine. Morphine and heroin. Tobacco, of course. Even tea and coffee. In general, all the poisons that our plants have evolved to kill the insects that ate them."

She grinned at my dismay.

"The scouts learned to enjoy them," she said. "Even more than humans do. And with no ill effects, what with their different metabolisms."

Her jewel flickered at the wall and the slot opened again with a tray of small yellow cakes on the shelf.

"With no breakfast, you must be hungry," She handed one to me. "They won't hurt you," she said. "They make them for me. Their own grub made me sick. Nearly killed me. Their chemists have come up with stuff to fit the human metabolism."

Still too badly shaken to think of eating, I did try one of the cakes. The taste was flat and dry, slightly bitter.

"You see why I wanted a steak?" She laughed when I put the cake back on the tray. "Drink up, anyhow. Alcohol is alcohol for everybody. And don't look so appalled. Ty'roon has a grand plan for Earth. His engineers are already at work on climatic modifications to reclaim the deserts and warm the tundras. He'll be able to employ several billion people."

"A drug farm?" I sipped my drink and looked away from the alluring contours under the sarl, trying to get a grasp on the Su'kyan and the world ahead. "The whole planet?"

"Most of it. There must be food crops, of course, for the workers."

The chair reached a mechanical arm to take my drink when I moved to put it down.

"These diseases?" Trying to think, I watched her face. "Can you vaccinate everybody?"

"The workers will be well protected."

"Just the workers? What about everybody else?"

"Too bad for them." She shrugged regretfully. "Ty'roon had the engineers consider reservations on Greenland and Antarctica, but the climates wouldn't do, even with modification. They found no available space for the population overload."

"Your good friend Ty'roon?" I recoiled from her golden smile. "He'll take care of his slaves and murder everybody else? Billions of innocent people?"

"Too bad if they die." She shrugged. "But you're unfair to him. He does have his duties to the syndicate, but he's kind and generous. He's been wonderful to me."

Her adoring tone was a needle through my heart.

"You love him?"

"I do." Her face had lit. "He's so splendid! So strong, so handsome, so tender. He knows everything. He'd do anything for me."

I sat blinking at her from the strange chair, acting with thoughts of all our nights together. She gazed away with an odd expression and turned back with a frown of regret.

"But sex—" She made a face. "We tried, but the experiment was unsatisfactory for him and painful for me." Smiling, she reached to touch my arm. "That's why I need you."

"I can't believe—" I shrank from her gold-nailed hand. "They've turned you to a monster!"

"To you, perhaps." She had flushed beneath the golden tan, but her voice stayed oddly quiet. "It all depends on who you are."

"So who are you?"

"A Cherokee." Her voice rose sharply. "My father used to brood about all you whites did to us. The diseases you brought us. The smallpox blankets you gave us. The treaties you broke. The hunting grounds you stole. The whole nations you exterminated."

She stabbed a golden finger at me. "Can you blame me?"

I swallowed hard and found no ready answer.

"You found my nation with a high stone-age culture. We had towns, built log cabins, wove blankets, made pottery, grew corn and beans and squash. We had our culture, our own religion."

"My father never forgot how you destroyed us. Your traders cheated us. You tricked us into treaties that you never kept. You drove us off our lands in Georgia and the Carolinas."

"In spite of that, we tried to get along. We formed a government like yours. We learned your ways, adopted your religion. We invented a syllabary to write our language. We published our own newspaper."

"My father told me what happened when you found gold on our land. You passed the Indian Removal Act. Your great President Andrew Jackson ignored the courts when they tried to protect us. We were evicted. Your settlers plundered and burned the homes we left behind."

"Your great general Winfield Scott marched us west to Oklahoma in a dreadful winter, on foot and starving. He never let us stop to rest or let the sick recover. We were four months on the way. Four thousand died. We call that death march the 'The Trail of Tears.'"

She shook her head, with a sad little smile.

"I think you will find Ty'roon and the Su'kyan kinder than you were." □

# EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT "A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY"— NOW WITHIN YOUR REACH!

Looking for the most comprehensive (and most definitive) source of information on the vast STAR WARS universe? Then trust *the source*: THE STAR WARS ENCYCLOPEDIA. This one-of-a-kind work draws together a wealth of data from the classic film trilogy, the spinoff radio dramas, novels, short stories, computer games, and every other part of the STAR WARS epic—all in the ultimate single-volume reference guide.



## INCLUDING:

- History—From the Sith Wars to the Galactic Civil War against the Empire
- Biography—From the renowned and infamous ("Luke Skywalker," "Darth Vader") to obscure and enigmatic ("Tnun Bdu")
- Geography—From desert-covered Tatooine to swamp-filled Dagobah
- Culture—From the secrets and beliefs of the Jedi Knights to the ways of Wookiees and Jawas
- Plus science, technology, cosmology, and a complete timeline of major historical events

- \*Alphabetized for easy reference
- \*Illustrated in full color throughout
- \*Compiled by a leading STAR WARS expert
- \*Featuring an introduction by New York Times bestselling author Timothy Zahn




**On Sale in June**  
Stories That Define Imagination  
A Division of The Ballantine Publishing Group

Reader Reviews Contests Special Offers Free newsletter  
[www.randomhouse.com/delrey/](http://www.randomhouse.com/delrey/)  
Free book previews Inside information Author interviews







IT WAS WEDNESDAY, THE DAY WHEN MARIA Cousneko Hernandez's relatives, friends, and neighbors came to the temple in her Mexico City home to watch her work as a spiritist. But in the middle of the service, her 17-year-old son Pablo burst through the doorway into the crowded room. His body still had the angular gawkiness of adolescence, but each day he looked more like his father. "Mama!" Pablo said urgently. His Aztec face had grown as pale as ice. "I had a close encounter! Just now, I was coming back from Chapultepec Park. I was taking a shortcut and there were aliens. Real aliens! They were short and had gray skin and big black eyes ..."

"Pablo," Maria said softly. Although she was only in her 40s, Maria had become gaunt from grief. She gestured at Señora Adame, who sat in a wheelchair at Maria's elbow. Señora Adame had come to Maria for help. "Pablo, you must wait your turn."

The audience that was crowded into the living room-turned-temple looked in anticipation from Maria to Pablo.

"But, Mama, I'm not here because I'm..." Pablo couldn't help but stare at Señora Adame. Everyone knew her as an able-bodied attorney who didn't belong in a wheelchair.

The temple crowd turned its attention to Maria, waiting for her response.

She felt their gaze upon her. They came to her temple three days a week. Every Monday they watched as Maria invisibly transferred light from the brain of the Lord to the dark spirits that sought help from her. Every Thursday, Jesus Christ spoke His messages through Maria. And today, Wednesday, was the day of healing.

"Aliens, Mama, I save aliens! From outer space!"

"Not now, Pablo," Maria said. He was her eldest, and she loved him with all her heart. But he lacked the wisdom that came from age and experience. "Your time will come later."

Maria cherished the old ways. Her son Pablo longed for only the new.  
Only the Moon Men could bring mother and son together.

# THE PERIGEE OF THE MOON

BY RESA NELSON

*Illustration by David Beck*

Pablo stood frozen in the doorway. The disbelief on his face made him look like a carved stone statue of an ancient god. As everyone turned their attention away from him and back to Maria, his expression fell into simple disappointment. He squeezed onto a wooden bench next to his cousins.

Maria relaxed as she felt the effects of the small piece of peyote button she had eaten before the service began. She fought the slight feeling of nausea. Sweat beaded her forehead. Then she heard herself say, "I am Antonio. I was the husband of Maria and am now her guardian spirit."

Maria took an unbroken, raw egg from among the crosses, candles, and small statues of the saints on the altar. She stroked the egg gently up and down one of Señora Adame's arms, then the other. When satisfied, Maria took a glass of water from the altar and broke the egg into it. She watched intently as the egg came up foamy and dirty.

Everyone looked at Maria expectantly.

Señora Adame looked frightened. "What is it?"

Maria looked back down at the egg in the water, a clear diagnosis of what had put Señora Adame in her wheelchair in the space of a heartbeat. Someone may have given Señora Adame the Evil Eye. Or maybe they'd made a doll in her image of and stuck pins in its legs to cripple her. "You've been bewitched," Maria said.

When Maria looked back at her audience, she saw that Pablo and his cousins had vanished.

**T**HEY WERE SITTING AT the kitchen table when Maria walked into the room. Three cousins sat back in their chairs, trying to look nonchalant. Pablo's younger brothers and sisters crowded around his elbows, hanging on his every word.

"And that's when they talked to me," Pablo said.

Maria poured herself a glass of juice. Instead of joining the children, she looked out the window over the sink.

"What did they say?" Conselita, his 13-year-old sister asked.

"How did they talk?" Benito, his youngest brother, asked. "Do aliens speak Spanish?"

Pablo smiled and tousled Benito's hair. "They don't speak out loud like us," Pablo said. "It's like they put their thoughts into my brain. I didn't hear them speak, but I knew what they were saying to me."

"So what did they say?" Conselita said impatiently.

"They want me to go on their ship. They said they have a special message for me."

Pablo frowned. "This part was hard to understand. It's like the waves of thought they were sending me got scrambled. But then it got better, and they said something about the parody of the Moon."

Maria spoke automatically, still staring out the window. "Perigee. It's the perigee of the Moon. When the Moon is at its closest to the Earth."

Pablo nodded in recognition. "That's it. The perigee of the Moon. They said it's easier for us to understand then. They said because we're mostly water, the Moon has a powerful effect on us, and they want to take advantage of it."

Benito frowned as he looked at his arms and hands. "I'm not made of water."

"Yes, you are—there's lots of fluids in the cells in your body," Conselita said impatiently. "I get it. It's like the way the full Moon makes bigger waves in the ocean. The closer the Moon is to the Earth, the more powerful it must be."

"So when is this perigee?" said one of the cousins.

"Two weeks from Saturday," Maria said.

"Mama, how do you know so much about the Moon?" Benito said.

"She used to be an astronomer," Pablo said, looking down at the table. "Remember?"

Antonio had been the spiritist in the family. He was from a small town where both witchcraft and spiritism were taken for granted as a part of everyday life.

But Maria was different. Although she had heard of both, she was from the city and had never paid much attention to anything except science.

Maria had explained her and Antonio's love for each other scientifically: Opposites attract.

But when Antonio died, almost a year ago, Maria's life became a nova. Antonio had become an invisible force that gave her strength, like the way gravity gives strength to everything that stays on Earth. Without him, she became weightless, floating adrift aimlessly.

Until she discovered that peyote, which Antonio had occasionally used but Maria had never tried, opened the door to a new dimension. One that let her tap into Antonio's strength again, however briefly.

Maria became less interested in science and more convinced that Antonio had been right about witchcraft and spiritism all along.

Because of the peyote, Maria lost her job as an astronomer. When she told Pablo he'd have to support the family, he quit school and got a construction job, putting aside his own dreams of becoming a scientist.

"Conselita, is dinner ready yet?" Maria said. "Yes, Mama, almost."

"Then set the table, children." As the boys arose, Maria gestured toward Pablo. "Let's go outside for a moment."

The children and their cousins averted their eyes, recognizing trouble in the making. Pablo followed his mother out the kitchen door. They walked along the winding stone path through the vegetable garden in their backyard.

Pablo could stand the silence no longer. "I'm telling the truth, Mama. I swear I am."

"I have no doubt that you are," Maria's gait was slow and deliberate. Pablo kept pace beside her. "But you know how dangerous it is to consort with witches."

Pablo laughed. "You don't understand. They're not witches, they're aliens."

"The Moon is a malevolent entity. If they consort with the Moon, it's a sure sign they're witches."

Pablo shook his head in disbelief. "We have high-tech museums all over Mexico. The new pesos has replaced the old. Someday everyone will have potable water in their homes—in their homes, Mama."

Maria pressed her lips together, holding on to her patience. He wasn't listening. It was getting worse all the time. "It's important to value our traditions. To honor the spirits and the Spirit World."

Pablo whirled to face her. His voice was laced with frustration. "You taught me how to use a telescope. You taught me the constellations. Who are you to suddenly lecture me about spirits?"

Before Maria could respond, Pablo bolted back into the house, leaving her alone in the garden.

**W**HEN SEÑORA ADAME came for her next treatment the following week, Maria noticed that none of her nieces or nephews came to temple that day. As she rubbed herbs against Señora Adame's skin, Maria scanned the audience.

In fact, there was no one under the age of 30 in the room.

When Maria was finished, Señora Adame gave her five pesos as a token of her appreciation. "Thank you, Maria," she said gratefully. "I can already sense the feeling coming back in my legs." She patted the arm of her wheelchair. "I won't be needing this much longer."

Maria watched the crowd as they left the temple. It was a small crowd today, as it had been last Tuesday and Thursday. Something was wrong. Terribly wrong.

**"I get it. It's like the way the full Moon makes bigger waves in the ocean. The closer the Moon is to the Earth, the more powerful it must be."**

ON SATURDAY MORNING MARIA EMERGED from the subway station and headed for Chapultepec Park.

Sixteen million people in Mexico City, Maria thought. Why do they all have to come to Chapultepec Park every weekend?

It was like an emerald island in the sea of concrete, traffic, and noise. A place of enchantment.

It wasn't until just an hour ago that Maria had realized Pablo and his motorbike were missing.

The park was enormous, covering what would have been dozens of city blocks. It was home to several museums and a zoo. Vendors lined the sidewalks, hawking everything from papayas carved like roses on sticks, to face painting. Children frolicked with their faces painted like cats and frogs and puppy dogs.

It wasn't until an hour ago that Maria realized that things were getting out of hand.

The Aztec dancers wore tall feather head-dresses, silver skull amulets, and rows of bangles around their ankles that shook like rattles. As their drummer played, one of the dancers stepped out of formation, picked up a death-head mask from the ground, and held it out for money to the crowd gathered in front of the National Museum of Anthropology.

It wasn't until her own sister told Maria she believed that the aliens Pablo had seen were spirits of the future.

Maria crossed the street and walked into the heart of the park. As the Aztec drum beat faded, someone up ahead shouted, "Uno, Dos, Uno, dos, tres, cuatro!" A funky Latin beat blared from a boombox in front of the Casa De Lago. A dozen men and women began dancing the chacha in line formation.

Without warning, the skies darkened and thunder rumbled above. Suddenly, it rained.

The crowded sidewalks cleared as families darted for shelter offered by the overhangs of the nearby museums. The cries of exotic birds from the zoo rose in the distance. In moments, vendors emerged, hawking transparent rain ponchos.

Maria brushed past them, intent on finding her son. It was then that the aliens swarmed her.

They rounded the corner of the sidewalk and ran into her without warning. They were small, with gray faces and large black slanted eyes. They were as silent as the grave.

Maria screamed in terror. She batted her hands in front of her face, trying to push them away.

The aliens backed off, as scared as Maria.

Her hands felt cool and shiny. She stared at them in horror. They were gray and black. The aliens' faces had rubbed off on the palms of her hands.

Maria was so frightened that she couldn't speak. It was as if her lungs were twisting up inside her. She gasped, fighting to breathe.

Then she noticed that the rain was washing the aliens' faces from her hands. She rubbed her hands together and watched the colors disappear.

Paint.

As she looked up, she saw the aliens weren't aliens, after all. They were children wearing face paint. They huddled together in the rain and looked terrified of her.

Before Maria could speak, thunder cracked above them, then the darkened skies lit up in a bright turquoise color.

The children shrieked and ran for cover.

Maria looked up at the sky in wonder. It stayed lit up for several moments, then became black again.

She had seen this happen once before, a long time ago when she was a little girl. Lightning had struck a transformer during a bad storm.

The rain stopped.

Without a sound, the sky lit up turquoise again. Maria tilted her head back and turned slowly so she could see the entire sky. It was pink around the edges.

As everyone else crowded under shelter, Maria stood alone on the sidewalk. Then something roared nearby. But it wasn't the roar of a zoo animal. It was the roar of something man-made. Like her son's motorbike.

"Pablo," she whispered.

The skies blackened.

Maria ran as fast as she could down the sidewalk toward the sound. "Pablo!"

The sidewalk wound past the small lake and into a thicket of trees.

The rideless motorbike came screeching out of the thicket. It narrowly missed Maria as it sped down the sidewalk, then crashed down an embankment and into the lake.

Silently, the skies lit up for just a moment.

She saw Pablo up ahead. He seemed to be hovering just above the ground like a sleeping narcoleptic.

"Pablo!" Maria ran toward him, and as the skies darkened, he fell weightlessly into her arms.

THEY WERE BOTH SILENT AS THEY RODE THE subway. Later, as they walked a few blocks from home, Maria noticed a small scrap of metallic material caught on Pablo's watch. She worked it loose and examined it.

"What is this?" Maria asked.

"Pablo wouldn't even look at her or the scrap. 'It has to do with them, doesn't it?'"

Pablo shrugged.

"You are good at obeying the first two rules: unlike *Señora* Adams, you don't permit yourself excessive wealth," Maria said. "And you respect the rights and properties of our neighbors."

Pablo kept pace by his mother's side. He looked steadily at the sidewalk in front of him.

"But you are forgetting the third rule: You must not alter or deny your Indian heritage. You must come back to our traditions. You've been drifting away from temple, and you're taking others with you. You're putting them at risk of bewitchment, not just yourself."

**Maria plucked each planet from its wire. She used toothpicks to impale the spheres together into the shape of a tiny body.**

Their home loomed ahead.

Maria took a new approach, speaking passionately. "The Spirit World is so important, Pablo. It is a good place, a loving place. It is the world that we will return to when we die. The spirits want to help us because they love us. And we can't forget to love them in return."

As they walked through the front door, Pablo looked up at his mother with his dark and serious eyes. "Who is it that you love more, Mama? The living or the dead?"

Maria returned his gaze, but she was too shocked to answer.

After a few moments, Pablo sighed in disgust and went to his room.

Maria fingered the piece of shiny fabric that she had pulled free of Pablo's watch.

THAT NIGHT MARIA PULLED OUT A CARDBOARD box that she had stuffed in the back of her closet the week after her husband died.

She pulled out a mobile of the solar system that she had made for Pablo when he was born. Because she had been an astronomer, she wanted to encourage Pablo to become a scientist himself. Because she was a mother, she had painted the planets in bright, beautiful colors for the delight of her child.

Maria plucked each planet from its wire. She used toothpicks to impale the spheres together into the shape of a tiny body. Jupiter was its head. After wrapping it like a mummy in her white handkerchief, Maria took a black felt pen and drew large cat eyes on the makeshift doll's face. She laid it flat on her sewing table.

Maria took the scrap of shiny metallic fabric and laid it across the doll's chest.

She felt terrible. She had never stooped to performing witchcraft before. There was no excuse for wishing harm upon another. There was no excuse for trying to control another's life. No excuse at all.

But Maria didn't know any other way to protect Pablo.

**One moment it  
was like being inside a  
sphere, the next moment it  
was like a funhouse maze  
with walls that twisted  
and turned.**

Maria pulled her pincushion close, and withdrew a long silver-headed pin. She centered it over the doll's heart.

"You will not hurt my son," Maria said, her voice shaking. The pin trembled in her hand. "I will not let you."

As Maria bore down on the doll, there was a slight popping sound as the pin pricked the metallic fabric.

Maria let go of the pin and it clattered on the tabletop. She put her elbows on the table and cradled her head in her hands. "I'm sorry," she whispered as she cried.

She couldn't do it. Not even for Pablo.

THE FOLLOWING WEDNESDAY MARIA HEALED Señora Adame of the bewitchment that had been cast upon her.

But there were only five people in the temple who witnessed Señora Adame as she rose from her wheelchair and walked again. Everyone else had gathered in the kitchen to hear Pablo talk about the aliens.

When Maria found out what was going on, she knew there was only one more thing she could do.

MARIA SAT IN THE TEMPLE ALONE ON SATURDAY afternoon. She had already eaten one peyote button and was waiting for it to take effect.

Despite the breeze blowing through the open windows, she realized she was drenched in sweat. As she shifted position in her chair, a wave of nausea overtook her.

Good, she thought. It's working.

Then Maria saw the shadow standing in the doorway. Light flickered inside the shadow like a candle flame in a dark window. "Thank God," Maria said. "Antonio."

"What is it, Maria," he said.

"I'm so afraid for Pablo. It's as if he can't hear me any more. I speak, but he doesn't hear. Doesn't listen. I don't know what to do."

Suddenly, the shadow was sitting next to her, perched on the arm of her chair. The light

inside it flickered brightly. "He's almost a man. He's learning to think for himself."

Maria dabbed the sweat from her forehead with the handkerchief from her abandoned doll. "I know that. It's as if he's forgotten the wisdom of his elders. I can help him. I can guide him. I can help him learn how to protect himself, but he doesn't want help. He doesn't ask for help. He doesn't want to learn anything from me, and I have so much that I can give him."

A shadowy hand reached out and caressed her hair. "You are forgetting who your son is. Pablo asks for help only when he has exhausted all other resources."

He wants to learn by himself. He must find his own way in the world."

Maria fought back tears. "But they are witches! What if they draw him to their way of thinking? What if he doesn't understand that no one has the right to play God?"

The shadowy hand traced her arm down to her fingertips and entwined its fingers with hers. "It's Pablo. You must trust what we've already taught him. He's a good boy."

Maria looked at the shadowy hand holding hers. It was like holding a handful of butterflies. The soft light inside the dark outline of Antonio's hand danced and brushed against her skin like soft kisses. "I'm afraid for him."

"It's time to let him become a man. Let go, Maria."

The light inside the shadow grew dim. Maria panicked.

"No. Not yet!" Maria reached for the small metal tin on the table next to her chair. As she hurried to open the lid, it popped off and the peyote buttons inside spilled onto her lap.

"Maria, don't," the shadow said.

"I need you," she said desperately. "I need your strength."

She had never had more than one peyote button at a time, and she was afraid to eat another one so soon. But she missed Antonio so much. And each time she saw him, the peyote had less and less of an effect. She was getting acclimated to it.

She bit into another button. Almost instantly, the light inside the shadow brightened.

Maria sighed in relief. It was a small price to pay for more time with Antonio.

"Maria," he said. "You forget you have your own strength. You must learn to rely upon it again instead of me."

No one knew her like Antonio, and no one understood how to help her take care of herself the way he did. Maria curled up and rested her head in the shadow's lap.

"I know. But I miss you, Antonio. I never dreamed I'd lose you so soon."

Antonio sighed and was quiet for a moment. Finally, he said, "I know, Maria. I'm here now."

As Maria drifted to sleep, she took solace in the presence of her husband's spirit.

IT WAS LIKE A DREAM.

Someone was shaking her. Hard.

"Maria!" A disembodied voice floated above her. "Maria, wake up!"

"It's the peyote," another voice said. "I think she's had too much this time." It sounded like her sister.

"What do we do? We can't just leave her here. If Pablo's in trouble, she'll want to be there."

Maria came awake for a moment, even though she couldn't open her eyes. "Pablo! What happened to Pablo?" She was floating in a world of darkness that wouldn't end.

"Don't worry, Maria. We'll find him."

THE NEXT THING MARIA KNEW, SHE WAS jostling in the darkness. Nothing but darkness.

As she fought back nausea, Maria was able to open her eyes for a moment. The night air rushed cold across her face. The stars were bright, and the Moon hung low on the horizon.

It was full, and a pale orange, like a wheel of cheese. It loomed as large as a monster ready to devour the Earth.

"The Moon," Maria said. "It's at perigee."

Then she lost consciousness again.

THE NEXT THING MARIA KNEW, SHE WAS standing outside, propped up by her sister on one side and her cousin on the other. They were half-walking and half-dragging her down a wide road surrounded by small hills. "Where am I?" Maria said as she tried to come awake.

"Good, she's awake," Maria's sister said.

Maria's cousin let go of Maria's waist and took her hand instead. "We've got to hurry. We saw Pablo. He's ahead of—"

The news jolted Maria wide awake.

"Where? Where's my son?"

Maria's sister pointed straight ahead. A large hill loomed at the end of the road. "There. He's climbing the Pyramid of the Moon."

As Maria's eyes adjusted to the night, there was enough light for her to understand where they were.

Teotihuacan. It was where her ancestors, the Aztecs, had thrived. A grand and sophisticated city that had been abandoned for hundreds of years by the time the Aztecs found it. And named it the City of the Gods.

Maria realized she was standing in the Avenue of the Dead, facing the plaza, temple, and palaces that skirted the pyramid.

Even though the night was clear, thunder boomed and the sky lit up turquoise for a split second.

In that brief moment, Maria saw an aircraft hovering directly above the pyramid.

Without thinking, Maria bolted free of her cousin's and sister's grasp, and ran as fast as she could until she reached the pyramid's

base. It loomed before her like a pale giant. Its steps were shallow and steep, flanked by a series of huge platforms that rose in tiers. As its creators had intended, it rose intimidatingly: an ancient skyscraper that was a stairway to the heavens.

Maria scrambled up its face by holding on to each next step with her hands and focusing on one step at a time. Near the top, the steps were little more than rubble. Still, she pressed on, intuitively finding handholds and footholds in the rubble. As she neared the plateau at the top of the pyramid, she was startled to see dozens of people standing there, all frozen in a stance looking skyward.

Maria wove her way among them. When she saw Pablo, she threw her arms around him in relief.

The sky lit up turquoise again, but this time the color was so close, so intense, so bright that it made Maria want to cry at the beauty of it. She let go of Pablo and stood beside him, letting herself look up just like everybody else.

The underside of the aircraft hovered directly above them. It was as liquid as the ocean, as changing as the sky. And out of it emerged angels, as fluid and dynamic as the plane from which they came.

It was a miracle.

Tears of joy and gratitude stained Maria's face as she watched the winged messengers drift down toward them.

"Will you come with us?"

Maria realized that the angels had spoken inside her head, not out loud. She slipped her hand inside Pablo's and held on firmly. She wanted the angels to include him, too. She had no idea why the angels were here or what it meant, but felt with the conviction of her heart that it must be something wonderful.

"Yes," Maria said. "Take us with you."

When she blinked, Maria discovered they were no longer standing on top of the pyramid. The dozens of people—including Pablo and Maria—were now standing inside a room that seemed to be shifting in shape. One moment it was like being inside a sphere, the next moment it was like a funhouse maze with walls that twisted and turned.

No one spoke. The people stood frozen and silent.

Maria squeezed her son's hand.

The angels appeared before them, but their wings were gone. Like the room, their shape shifted until they appeared as short, gray-skinned beings with large black eyes.

"Witches!" Maria was too angry to be afraid. They had duped her into putting not only herself but her child in danger.

Metal tables arose from the floor. A woman behind Maria stepped forward and laid down on a table. The gray witches cut the woman's clothes off with one swift slash of a large scalpel.

Then they stuck a large silver needle into her.

The woman was silent. Just like a doll.

Maria tried to run forward to free the

woman, but her feet wouldn't move.

One of the gray witches looked at Maria as he slowly walked toward her. The gray witch came closer, so close that Maria could see him breathe.

Pablo took a step forward.

Maria clung to his hand. She looked in terror from Pablo to the gray witch. "No! Not Pablo!"

Pablo took another step toward the nearest metal table.

"Take me instead," Maria said. She locked her gaze with the gray witch and looked for the slightest hint of compassion.

Pablo took another step, and his hand broke free of his mother's grasp. Maria still could not move.

She turned to bargaining. "He is just a boy. He knows nothing. Take me! I'm a spiritist. I'm your enemy. I heal the people you bewitch. This is your opportunity to break me. Take it."

The gray witch seemed to consider her offer.

Suddenly Maria found herself laying on a metal table. Pablo stood far away.

When the witches inserted the needles inside her, Maria wanted to scream but her voice wouldn't work. Even worse, she saw Pablo crying as he watched her.

Please, she thought. Make it stop.

No, the witch's voice said inside her head. But we can make you forget.

THE NEXT THING SHE KNEW, SHE WAS SITTING on the steps at the base of the pyramid.

As the effects from the peyote cleared from her head, Maria felt as if she were waking up from a dream. She could almost remember the dream, but the harder she tried to remember, the faster the memory slipped away from her. She breathed deeply. Something had changed. Something inside her.

Then she noticed that Pablo was sitting beside her. She was startled to see him wipe tears away from his face. She took his hand in hers.

"Pablo," she said. "What's wrong?"

"They said they would be here tonight. But they didn't come."

Maria squeezed his hand. "Don't you know how lucky you are? Think of the danger you could have been in if—"

Pablo yanked his hand away. "I thought I could trust them! I thought I had finally found someone who would be there when I needed them."

Maria looked at him in astonishment. "But Pablo. You have me."

"No!" Pablo erupted like a volcano. "You take peyote because you'd rather be with my dead father's spirit than with your living children. You tell me to take care of the others, or you let them fend for themselves, while you cling to the past. You're as distant as the Moon!" Pablo paused as his emotions collapsed like a house of cards. "I miss you, Mama." He looked at her helplessly and began to sob.

Maria automatically wrapped her arms around him. "I didn't realize... I didn't know." She closed her eyes and held him tight.

And then there was a faint voice inside her head. So faint that she realized as she heard it that it could only be her imagination.

It was Antonio's voice. He said, "How can Pablo become a man until he knows it's safe to stop being a boy? I can't show him that—it's up to you."

Maria looked all around, just to be sure. Antonio wasn't there. There was no shadow, no lights shining within it.

Only the night and the stars and the moonlight.

It was in that moment that Maria felt what had changed inside her. She no longer felt weightless. She was no longer adrift. Her own strength, like gravity, had found its way back to her. She remembered what it meant to be an astronomer. And a mother.

She broke away from Pablo, keeping one arm around his shoulders. "Look," she said to him. "Look up at the sky."

He wiped away his tears again and took a deep breath. "What about it?"

Maria pointed at the Moon. "See how big it is? How beautiful? Doesn't it look like if you reached out you could touch it?"

Pablo nodded impatiently. "Yeah? So what?"

Maria waved her hand across the night sky. "And look at the stars. Don't they look just as close?"

"I guess."

Maria spoke softly to him. "From here, the Moon looks just as close as the stars around it, even though those stars are light years away. Like your father is light years away, but he's still close enough to touch."

Pablo looked at her in concern.

Maria smiled. "I'm not talking about peyote. What I mean is that your father left a piece of himself behind, in you, in me. Just by knowing him, he became a part of us."

"I wish he were still here," Pablo whispered.

"So do I." Maria steepled herself. "But I promise to do better. You're right—you and your brothers and sisters are more important. I'm here now."

Pablo looked at her seriously. "You can't just say it, you have to do it."

Maria beamed and pushed his hair away from his face as she looked at him with pride. "You are a fine man, Pablo. Such a good man."


He kept looking at her until his face relaxed into a smile. "It's a beautiful night, isn't it?"

Maria smiled back. "Yes. The most beautiful night I've seen in a long time."

Maria noticed her sister and her cousin sitting on the opposite side of the steps. Looking back, she was surprised to see so many people sitting on the steps of the pyramid and watching the night sky.

Maria rested her head on her son's shoulder and gazed at the stars with love and longing.

But, then again, the Moon was at perigee only once a year. □



*Robert Jordan's Crown of Swords was but one of the many best-selling novels lucky enough to be graced by a Darrell Sweet cover.*

**BY KAREN HABER**

# SWEET

*For an old-fashioned guy, Darrell K.*



**If** DARRELL K. SWEET were a character in a science fiction novel, the tale would be entitled *The Man Out Of Time*. It would be action-packed, filled with horse-like animals and anachronistic weapons. And Sweet would paint a great cover for it. "I've always had the impression that I was in the wrong century," the artist says. "I like the art forms of the 1600s and 1700s. I'm a nineteenth-century man, or maybe even eighteenth. I don't like anything having to do with computers or even slide projectors. What I do I do by hand."

Sweet's definitely a do-it-yourself non-cyber kind of guy. For example, he put a roof on his New Jersey house with some help from his son, Darrell R., and is now refurbishing the kitchen. In his spare time he makes flintlock rifles and plays the harpsichord rather than that brash upstart, the piano. He hopes to pack up his old paintbrushes and, with wife Janet, decamp for Cody, Wyoming, where the cool wind still whistles through the tall grass. Once settled in the West, he plans to build his own house and furnish it with furniture of his own making. In the meantime, he paints, and paints well.

# SENSATION

*Sweet's paintings are out of this world.*



*"She shoved a book into my hand, and it was*



**I**N HIS OWN WORDS, DARRELL SWEET HAS "BEEN SWINGING a brush for sixty years." In that time he's created memorable covers for hundreds of science fiction and fantasy books. His odyssey into the fantastic began when he met Judy-Lynn del Rey in the corridors of a publishing house.

Sweet recalls: "I'd been painting historicals and such for Dell—I was a classical oil painter—and I had just delivered a cover and was walking down the hall when this dynamo came toward me.

"Are you Sweet?" she said.

"Yes, Ma'am," I replied.

"Want to do some artwork?"

"Sure."

"She shoved a book into my hand, and it was the beginning of a beautiful relationship. She loved that first painting I did for her so much that she kept it on her wall for six months. And she, and later, Lester, gave me as much work as I could handle."

This unexpected connection brought together the romantic and historical elements that had always intrigued Sweet and enabled him to use them in his work. He began to want to draw the reader into the novel by making the images seem accessible and natural, to do for science fiction and fantasy what N.C. Wyeth had done for American illustration.

"Philosophically and economically, the Del Reys gave me a platform. I was churning out artwork for them as fast as I could, and therefore I had to sharpen my technical skills. Every piece I did had to achieve a certain level. I had to come up to speed.

"I've gotten to the point where I paint as fast as I can think. In fact, sometimes the paint lags behind and I use a hairdryer to speed it up. Luckily acrylics are a quick medium, quick drying."

He works fast, works hard, and the result is powerful imagery with old-fashioned storybook appeal, rich strong colors, alluring detail, and engaging expressive characters. "I was aiming for a 'Scribners Classics' quality in my work," he says. "Where the level of artwork and literature matched."

A master of vertiginous perspective and exotic color, Sweet struts his stuff in covers for the Jack Chalker novels *The Lands of the Middle Dark* and *The Song of the Dancing Gods*, pushing color and perspective to the max as a way of indicating uneasiness.

"Never be too neutral with color," he warns. "Extremely dark and extremely bright is fine. Neutrality is death."

His memorable covers for Heinlein juveniles include *Citizen Of The Galaxy*, whose eerie yellow sky and sinister figures are a perfect enticement for young readers. In *Beyond Fantasy: The Art of Darrell K. Sweet*, (FPG, 1996) the artist says: "This is one of my favorite paintings. The image contrasts the optimistic achievements of a mechanical future with the human condition. I wanted to illustrate the poverty and hardship that is often the cost of technological advancements by showing the people on society's fringe. The simple, not-quite-symmetrical composition was chosen to emphasize that social statement."

At the time (1978), the artist was still signing paintings with his full name. The Ballantine art director complained that his signature was taking up too much cover space and suggested that he use his initials. As a result, Sweet has signed his work "DKS" ever since."

"I really liked doing Heinlein's novels," he says. "They were easy to read and good visually. But he did have a nasty habit of putting his action in a planet covered with fog. And he also liked using animals that didn't have joints or any skeletal frames."

Sweet says that the combination of a writer's lack of visual skill and an artist's lack of verbal skill can create a situation in which diplomacy is required, at least on the part of the artist.

"The artist can run into trouble when he maps out something that the writer has described and it doesn't work. What do you do? Especially if the author's growling, and if they have a particular image of



**LEFT:** The cover painting for Alfred Coppel's *Glory* combined the finest aspects of SF and fantasy. **ABOVE:** The Master of Norriya by Wayland Drew portrayed a meeting of two vastly different technologies. **BELOW:** The artist has illustrated many of SF's classics, including Robert A. Heinlein's *Red Planet*.



*the beginning of a beautiful relationship."*

**LEFT: Pirates of the Thunder by Jack L. Chaiker proves the artist to be adept at hard SF imagery. BELOW: The cover to Citizen of the Galaxy allowed Sweet to bring another Robert A. Heinlein scene to life. RIGHT: The juvenile novels of Isaac Asimov were also given a dose of the magic of Darrell Sweet, as in Lucky Starr and the Rings of Saturn.**

what's going to sell the book. I'll accept the information—if I can decipher it—and try to get them to understand that we're all in the same boat."

Despite the potential for temperamental displays by the writers, Sweet enjoys working with them and thinks that successful illustration often requires an act of collaboration between artist and author. "I often call the writer, either to clarify a point or bounce ideas off. You run into a problem you can't quite solve, and you've got to talk to somebody connected to the work. Sometimes just talking about it shakes it out."

A long-time pro, Sweet separates his personal feelings from the painting assignment. "I've never been in a situation where I've felt that I couldn't work with a writer, or solve a problem in the work. I've never been so embarrassed or offended by the contents of a manuscript that I couldn't deal with it."

Personalities aside, he loves what he does, and especially enjoys painting deep space covers. In a 1983 painting for the novel *Glorge*, by Alfred Coppel, Sweet created a spaceship with massive solar sails, a startling golden-yellow craft that dominates the complementary purple-blue backdrop of space. Says Sweet, "Taking my key from the description in the story, I designed a ship that was a cross between a square rigger and a massive cordless power drill." In this work he employed a painterly quality when laying in the sails that achieves an effect both nostalgic and fantastic. It's a wonderful romantic painting.

Sweet's artistic process begins with free-hand sketches he makes as he reads a manuscript. When his son was younger, he would pose him and a few friends draped in cloth, holding props, and snap a few Polaroid photos for reference. But he prefers to sketch from scratch. From these studies he produces a few color sketches and submits them for approval. Once his initial sketches have been okayed, he gessoes a masonite board—"I took to it after literally putting the brush through the canvas during an energetic painting session"—and draws his composition in pencil directly upon the board's unyielding surface.

"I want to push paint around—the early sketches allow me the freedom to work with color because I already know where I'm going but I'm not locked into it. The color sketches help me out. I find stuff in the paint that I haven't seen before. And if something's not right, they allow me to make corrections, take a razor blade and scrape things."

He begins with the big forms and shapes first, working left to right, saving the center of interest—the best—for last.

Sweet began drawing at age three—pheasants in a nearby field—and he hasn't stopped yet. Rural New Jersey, where he grew up, was still filled with stands of oak, streams, and fields that encouraged a young boy's imagination. Thanks to his academically parents, Sweet grew up reading Chaucer, Poe, Shakespeare. Comic books were not tolerated in the Sweet household, and Darrell's first taste of fantastic literature came when he read "Beowulf" and "Song of Roland."

During high school he made such a pest of himself in art class that he was sent to the cafeteria—where he spent two years painting scenes from the Revolutionary War on the walls. Although art was important to him, it wasn't until he enrolled at Syracuse University that his goals clarified. He and his friends would sneak into the print lab at night and practice lithography. After college and a brief unhappy stint as an artist with an advertising firm, luck intervened. Sweet was drafted and stationed at Fort Dix. He was doubly lucky in that he was not shipped out to Korea, and that among his squadron mates were several artists. Through one in particular, wildlife artist Douglas Allen, Sweet discovered the work of N.C. Wyeth and, later, Howard Pyle. He also learned about the world of the professional artist. These images of Americana and American wildlife left a lasting impression on the young artist. When he left the service he put



"I want to push paint around..."



together an improved portfolio, found an agent to represent him, and began his professional life.

He began working for *Reader's Digest*, painting covers for coffee table books and historical, Americana, or natural history illustrations for the magazine. He eventually branched out to work for the publishing houses of Ballantine, Bantam, Dell, and Western. Then came his close encounter with Judy Lynn del Rey. The rest is art history.

In addition to Wyeth and Pyle, Sweet cites Thomas Moran and John Berkey among his influences. "Berkey's able to design huge forms, to

achieve the illusion of mass without resorting to comparative figures for scale. He's so good that he's intimidating."

For Sweet, the defining consideration has always been and will always be quality.

"I was lucky enough to be working during the Golden Age of science fiction, and I wanted the art to be the same level as the literature. I always thought that quality saved my butt—I was always after it. For me it was always a priority. Maybe that's old-fashioned thinking, but as I said, I'm an old-fashioned kind of guy." □



There was no known cure for the  
Worrybird's ills, but that didn't stop  
the Saints and Scientists from trying.

# Jack Neck and the Worrybird

**O**N THE WESTERN EDGE OF PUTTY-COLORED DRUDGE City, in the neighborhood of the Stoltz Hypobiological Refinery ("The lowest form of intelligent life—the highest form of dumb matter!"), not far from Newspaper Park and Boris Crocodile's Beanery and Caustics Bar—both within a knucklebone's throw of the crapulent, crepitant Isinglass River—lived mawkly old Jack Neck, along with his bat-winged and shark-toothed bonedog, Motherway.

By Paul Di Filippo Illustration by Chris Mars



JACK NECK WAS RETIRED NOW, AND MIGHTY GLAD OF it. He'd put in many a lightheous lustrum at Krespo's Mangum Exordium, stirring the siorvats, cleaning the lard filters, sweeping up the escaped tiddles. Plenty of work for any man's lifetime. Jack had busted his hump like a shemp to earn his current pension (the hump was just now recovering; it didn't wander so bad like it used to), and Jack knew that unlike the lazy young and fecund time-eaters and space-sprawlers whom he shared his cheapjack building with, he truly deserved his union stipend, all five hundred cronos per moon (except once a year, during the Short Thirteenth, when he only got 495). Why, it had taken him a whole year of retirement just to forget the sound of the tiddles crying out for mercy. Deadly core-piercing, that noise was, by Saint Fistula's Nose!

But now, having survived the rigors of the Exordium (not all his buddies had lived to claim their Get-gone Get-by; why, his pal Slam Slap could still be seen as a screaming bas-relief in the floor tiles of Chamber 409), Jack could take life slow and easy. During daylight hours he could loll around his bachelor-unclean flat (chittering dust-bunnies prowling from couch to cupboard; obscuratist buildup on the windows, sulfur-yellow sweatcrust on the inside, pinky-gray smogma on the outside); quaffing his Anonymous Brand Bitterberry Slungas (two cronos per sixpack, down at Bats Truant's Package Parlor); and watching the televised Motorball games. Lookit that gracefully knotted Dean Tesh play, how easily he scored, like a regular Kayleebill Canton paypaw!

Ignoring his master's excited rumbles and despairing whoops, Motherway the steel-colored bonedog would be peacefully by the side of Jack's slateslab chair, mostly droop-eyed and score-birthing, occasionally emitting a low growl directed at a more-than-usually daring dustbunny, the bonedog's acutely articulated leathery wings reflexively sickersnacking in stifled pursuit.

Three times daily Motherway got his walkies. Down the four flights of badly lit, incongruently angled stairs Jack and his pet would clomber, Motherway's cloven chitin hooves scrabbling for purchase on the scarred boards. Last time down each day, Jack would pause in the lobby and check for mail. He never got anything, barring his moonly check, but it was good to clear the crumbles out of his wall-adherent mailsack. Dragoman Mr Spittle wouldn't leave the mail if contaminacious crumbles nested within Jack's fumable-pocked personal mailsack. And Jack didn't blame him! One or two migrant crumbles a day could be dealt with—but not a whole moonly nest!

Outside on Marmoreal Boulevard, Jack and Motherway always turned left, toward Newspaper Park. Marmoreal Boulevard paralleled the Isinglass River, which gurgled and chortled in its high-banked channel directly across the Boulevard from Jack's flat. The meen and treacherous slippery river was further set off from foot and vehicle traffic by a wide promenade composed of oath-mortared betterblox and a rail of withyweave. Mostly the promenade remained vacant of strollers. It didn't pay to get too close to the Isinglass, as more than one incautious twittler had discovered when—peering curiously over the rail to goggle at the rainbowed planduff sluice-juice pouring from the Stoltz Refinery pipes—he or she would be looped by a long snickered manipulator and pulled down to eternal aquatic slavery on the spillchag plantations.

#### GAWPEERS AND LOOKYLOOS, BEWARE!

read the numerous signage erected by the solicitous Drudge City Constabulary.

(Boating on the Isinglass held marginally fewer risks. Why, people were still talking about the event that quickly came to be known throughout Drudge City and beyond as 'Pale Captain Dough's Angling

Dismay,' an event that Jack had had the misfortune to witness entire from his own flat. And he had thought the squeaky pleas of the tiddles were hard to dislodge from his mind—)

Moving down the body- and booth-crowded sidewalk with a frowsty and jangly galmph that was partially a result of his fossilized left leg and partially attributable to the chunk-heeled, needle-toed boots that compressed his tiny feet unmercifully, Jack would enjoy the passing sights and sounds and smells of his neighborhood. A pack of low-slung Cranials surged by, eliciting a snap and lunge from the umbilical-restrained Motherway. From the peddle-powered, umbrella-shielded, salted-chicken cart operated by Mother Gimlett wafted a delectable fragrance that always convinced Jack to part with a thread or two, securing in return a greasy paper cone of crispy steaming legumes. From the door of Bors Crocodile's poured forth angular music, the familiar bent notes and goo-modulated subsonics indicating that Stinky Frankie Konk was soloing on the hookah-piped banjo. Jack would lick his bristly nodule-dotted lips, anticipating his regular visit that evening to the boisterous Benary and Caustics Bar, where he would be served a shot of his favorite dumble-ram by affable bartender Dinky Pachinko.

On the verges of Newspaper Park, beneath the towering headline tree, Jack would let slip Motherway's umbilical, which would retract inside the bonedog's belly with a whir and a click like a rollershade pull. Then Motherway would be off to romp with the other cavorting animaks, the gliscats and sweaterbats, the tinkleslides and slither-slithes. Jack would amble over to his favorite bench, where reliably could be found Dirty Bill Brownback. Dirty Bill was more or less permanently conjoined with his bench, the man's indiscriminate flesh mated with the porously acquisitive material of the seat. Surviving all weathers and seasons, subsisting on a diet scrounged from the trash-can placed conveniently at his elbow, Dirty Bill boasted cobwebbed armpits and crumbly-infested trousers, but was nonetheless an affable companion. Functioning as a center of fresh gossip and rumors, news and notions, Dirty Bill nevertheless always greeted Jack Neck with the same stale jibe.

"Hey, Neck, still wearing those ceiling togs? Can't you afford better on your GGGB?"

True, Jack Neck's outfit went unchanged from one moon to the next. His ivory-and-ash-striped shirt and identically patterned leggings were the official workwear of his union, the MIMM, or Mangum Maulers Monitoring Moiety, and Jack's body had grown accustomed to the clothes through his long employment. Of course, the clothes had also grown accustomed to Jack's body, fusing in irregular lumpy seams and knobly patches to his jocund, rubicund, moribund flesh. That was just the way it went these days, in the midst of the indeterminate. The stability of the Boredom was no more. Boundaries were flux-prone, cause-and-effect ineffectual, and forms not distinct from ideations. You soon got used to the semi-regular chaos, though, even if, like Jack, you had been born way back in the Boredom.

With the same predictability exhibited by Dirty Bill (human social vapidity remained perhaps the most stable force in the Indeterminate), Jack would consistently reply, "Happens I fancy these orts, Dirty Bill. And they fancy me!"

With a chuckle and a snaggletooth smigger, Dirty Bill would pat the bench beside him and offer, "Sit a spell then, neckless Jack Neck — not too long though, mind you! — and I'll fill you in on my latest gleanings. That is, if you'll share a salty chickenpea or two!"

"Gladly, you old plank-ass!" Diverting as the perpetual Motorball Tournays on television were, Jack relished simple human intercourse. So while Motherway chased six-legged squirrels (all four of the mature bonedog's feet an inch or two off the ground; only bonedog pups could get much higher), Jack and Dirty Bill would confab the droogly minutes away.

After his supper each night—commonly a pot of slush-shungullion

Dirty Bill boasted cobwebbed armpits

# and crumbly-infested trousers...

ora frozen precooked bluefish fillet heated in the hellbox, whichever being washed down with a tankard of Smith's Durian Essence—Jack would leave Motherway behind to lick doggy balls and unbilical while the bone-dog's master made his visit to Boris Crocodile's. There on his reserved barstool, while empty-eyed Nori Nought danced the latest fandango or barcarole with beetle-browed Zack Zither, Jack Neck would nod his own disproportionate head in time to the querulous squeaking of Stinky Frankie Konk and affirm to all who would pay any heed to the elderly GGGB-er, "Yessir, assuming you can get through the rough spots, life can turn out mighty sweet!"

But all that, of course, was before the advent of the Worrybird.

**T**HAT FATEFUL MORNING DAWNED NASTY, LOW-hanging hieratic skies and burnt-toast clouds, an ugly odor like all the rain-drenched, lost stuffed toys of childhood seeping in from the streets. Upon opening first his good left eye, then his bad right (twasn't the eye itself that was dodgy, but only the nacreous cheek-caruncle below it that was smooching the orb closed), Jack Neck experienced a ripe intestinal feeling telling him he should stay in bed. Just huddle up 'neath his checkerboard marshmallow quilt, leaving his beleathered feet safe in the grooves they had worn in the milkweed-stuffed mattress. Yes, that seemed just the safest course on a day like today, so pawky and slyboots.

But the allure of the common comforts awaiting him proved stronger than his intuition. Why, today was a Motorball matchup made in Heaven! The Chlorine Castigators versus Dame Middlecamp's Prancers! And then there was Motherway to be walked, Dirty Bill's disly yatterings, that Dinky-Pachinko-poured tot of dumberrum to welcome midnight in. Surely nothing mungy nor malting would befall him, if he kept to his established paths and habits....

So out of his splinted cot old bunion-rumped Jack Neck poured himself, heavy hump leading Lady Grivety in an awkward pavane. Once standing, with minor exertions Jack managed to hitch his hump around, behind, and upward to a less unaccommodatingly exigent position. Then he essayed the palpable trail midst the debris of his domicile that led to the bathroom.

As soon as Jack entered the WC, he knew his vague forebodings had been spot-on. But it was now too late to return to the safety of his blankets. For Jack saw with dismay that out of his chipped granite commode, like a bawful excremental spirit, there arose a Smoking Toilet Puppet.

The rufous figure was composed of an elongated mud-colored torso, sprouting two boneless and sinuous claw-fingered arms, and topped by a rufous warpy face. The Puppet's head was crowned by a small funny crater, giving it kind their name.

"Jaa-neck," wailed the Puppet. "Jack Neck! Step closer! I have a message for you."

Jack knew that although the creature might indeed have a valid and valuable delphic message for him, to heed the Puppet's summons was to risk being abducted down to the gluck-mokey Septic Kingdom ruled by Baron Sugarlinger. So with an uncommon burst of energy, Jack grabbed up a wood-bathed sump-plunger and whanged the Puppet a good one on its audacious incense-dispensing bean.

While the Puppet was clutching its abused noggin and sobbing most pitiously, Jack stepped around it and dashed. Widdershins and downward swirled the invader, disappearing with a liquidly dopping "Nooooooo—!"

Jack did his old man's business quickly while the runnels still gurgled, then lowered the heavy toilet lid against further home invasions.

He stepped to the sink and the swartcrusted mirror above it, where he flaked scales off his reflection. He shaved his forehead, restoring the pointy dimensions of his once-stylish hairline, plucked some regrowth out of his ears, lacquered his carbuncle, and congratulated himself on meeting so forcefully the first challenge of the day. If nothing else adventured, he would be polly-with-a-lolly!

Back through the bedroom and out into his sitting sanctuary, where Motherway lay snoozily on his falsome scrap of Geelink carpet. Approaching the dirty window that looked out upon Marmoreal Boulevard and the Isinglass, the incunations and overoptimistic Jack Neck threw open the wormy sash and shouldered forward, questing additional meaning and heruspices from the day.

And that was precisely the moment the waiting Worrybird chose to land talon-tight upon the convenient perch of Jack's hapless hump!

Jack yelped, and with an instinctive yet hopeless shake of his hump withdrew into the refuge of his apartment, thinking to disconcert and dislodge the Worrybird by swift maneuvers. But matters had already progressed beyond any such simple solution. The Worrybird was truly and determinedly ensconced, and Jack realized he was doomed.

Big as a turkey, with crepe-like vulture wings, the baldy Worrybird possessed a dour human face exhibiting the texture of ancient overwaxed linoleum, and exuded a stench like burning crones. Jack had seen the ominous parasites often, of course, riding on their lean, slumpy victims. But never had he thought to be one such!

Awakened by the footrarrow, Motherway was barking and leaping and snapping, frantically trying to drive the intruder off. But all the bone-dog succeeded in doing was gouging his master's single sensible leg with his hooves. Jack managed to calm the bone-dog down, although Motherway continued to whimper while anxiously fidgeting.

Now the Worrybird craned its paste-palld pug-ugly face around on its long sebaceous neck to confront Jack. It opened its hideous rubbery mouth and intoned a portentous phrase.

"Never again, but not yet!"

Jack threw himself into his slateslab chair, thinking to crush the grin bird, but it leaped nimbly atop Jack's skull. By Saint Foraminifer's Liver, those scalp-digging claws hurt! Quickly Jack stood, preferring to let the bird roost on his hump. Obligingly, the Worrybird shifted back.

"Oh, Motherway," Jack implored, "what a fardelicious grievance has been construed upon us! What, oh, what are we to do?"

Motherway made inutile answer only by a plangent sympathetic whuffle.

**THE FIRST THOUGHT TO FORM IN THE ANXIOUS MIND OF** bird-besridden Jack Neck was that he should apply to the local Health Clinic run by the Little Sisters of Saint Fangachar. Surely the talented technicians and charity caregivers there would have a solution to his grisly gras! (Although at the back of his mind loomed the pessimistic question, perhaps Worrybird implanted, Why did anyone suffer from Worrybirditis if removal of same were so simple?) So, leaving Motherway behind to guard the apartment from any further misfortunes that this inopportune day might bring, Jack and his randomly remonstrative rider ("Never again, but not yet!") clattered down the four flights of slant stairs to the street.

Once on Marmoreal (where formerly friendly or neutral neighbors now winced and retreated from sight of his affliction), Jack turned not happy-wise left but appointment-bound right. At the intersection of the Boulevard and El Chino Street, he wambled south on the cross-street. Several blocks down El Chino his progress was arrested by the sloppy aftermath of an accident: a dry fall of Smith's Durian Essence had collided with one loaded with Walrus Brand Brochiettes. The

combination of the two antagonistic spilled foodstuffs had precipitated something noxious: gorging mounds of quivering dayglo carpiaplasm that sought to ingest any flesh within reach. (The draft animals, a brace of Bananas Slings per drag, had already succumbed, as had the blindly argumentative drivers, one Pheon Ploog and a certain Elmer Surocy.)

Responding with the nimble reflexes and sassy footwork expected from any survivor of Drudge City's ordinary cataclysms, Jack dodged into a nearby building, rode a Recirculating Transport Fountain upward and took a wayward rooftop path around the crisis before descending, all the while writing a hundred times on the blackboard of his mind an exclamation-punctuated admonition never to mix internally his favorite suppertime drink with any lota of Walrus Brand Brochettes.

Encountering no subsequent pandygangy, Jack and his foul avian passenger arrived at the Health Clinic on Laguna Diamante Way. Once inside, he was confronted with the stern and rubelescent face of Nurse Gwendolyn Hindlip, Triage Enforcement Officer. From behind her rune-carven desk that seemed assembled of poorly chosen driftwood fragments, Nurse Gwendolyn sized up Jack and his hump-burden, then uttered a presumptuous pronouncement.

"You might as well kill yourself now, you old mummer, and free up your GGGG for a yunking!"

Jack resented being called a mummer—a mildly derisive slang term derived from his union's initials—almost more than he unbriqueted at the suicidal injunction.

"Shut up, you lava-faced hincy harridan! Just take my particulars, slot my citizen-biscuit into the chewer, and mind your own business!"

Nurse Gwendolyn sniffled with bruised emotionality. Jack had scored a mighty blow on a tender spot with his categorical comment "lava-faced." For Nurse Gwendolyn's scare-making and scarified visage did indeed reflect her own childhood brush with a flesh-melting disease that still occasionally plagued Drudge City. Known as Trough'n'Stough, the nonfatal disease left its victims with a straitlaced trapunto epidermis. Nurse Gwendolyn forever attributed her sour old-maidhood to the stigma of this pillowpuff complexion, although truth be told, her vile tongue had even more to do with her empty bed.

Smuffling aggrievedly, Nurse Gwendolyn now did as she was bade, at last dispatching a newly ID-braceleted Jack to a waiting area with the final tart remark, "You'll surely have a long uncomfortable wait, Mr Neck, for many and more seriously afflicted—yet nonetheless with a better prognosis—are the helpseekers afore you!"

Coercing his fossil leg into the waiting room, Jack saw that Nurse Gwendolyn had not been merely flibbering. Ranked and stacked in moaning drifts and piles were a staggering assortment of Drudge City's malfunctioners. Jack spotted many a one showing various grades of Masktyme's Curse, in which the face assumed the characteristics of a thickly blurred latex mold of the actual submerged features beneath. The fake countenance remained connected by sensory tendrils, yet was migratory, so that one's visage stopped about like warm Jello, eyes peeking from nostrils or ears, nose poking from mouth. Other patients showed plain signs of Exoskeletal Exfoliation, their limbs encased in osteoclastic armor. One woman—dressed in a tattered shift laterally patterned blue and gold—could only be host to Dolly Dwindles Syndrome: as she approached over months her ultimate doll-like dimensions, her face simultaneously grew more lascivious in a ghoulish manner.

Heaving a profound sigh at the mortal sufferings of himself and his fellows, Jack sat himself saggingly down in a low-backed chair that

permitted the Worrybird to maintain its grip upon Jack's hump, and resigned himself to a long wait.

On 740th "Never again, but not yet!", Jack's name was called. He arose and was conducted to a cubicle screened from an infinity of others by ripped curtains the color of old tatar sauce. Undressing as was not an option, so he simply plopped down on a squeakily examining table and awaited the advent of a healer. Before too long the curtains parted and a lab-coated figure entered.

This runcible-snouted doctor himself, thought Jack, should have been a patient, for he was clearly in an advanced state of Tesselated Scale Mange, as evidenced by alligatorized wrists and neck poking from cuff and collar. Most horribly, the medico dragged behind him a long ridged tail, ever-extending like an accumulating stalactite from an infiltrated organ at the base of the spine.

"Doctor Weighbead," said the professional in a confident voice, extending a crocodile paw. Jack shook hands happily, liking the fellow's paw. But Dr. Weighbead's next question shattered Jack's sanguinity:

"Now, what seems to be the matter with you, Mr. Neck?"

"Why—why, Doc, there's an itrisome and grotty Worrybird implacably a-sway upon my tired old hump!"

Dr. Weighbead made a suave dismissive motion. "Oh, that. Since there's no known cure for the Worrybird, Mr Neck, I assumed there was another issue to deal with, some unseen plaque or innervation perhaps."

"No known cure, Doc? How can that be?"

Doctor Weighbead cupped his dragony chin. "The Worrybird has by now stily and inextricably mingled his Alakshic Aura with yours. Were we to kill or even remove the little vampire-sparrow, you too would perish. Of course, you'll perish eventually anyway, as the lachrymose-lark spiffens off your vitality. But that process could take years and years. 'Never again will you smile, but not yet shall you die.' That's the gist of it, I fear, Mr. Neck."

"What—what do you recommend then?"

"Many people find some small palliation in building a festive concealing shelter for their Worrybird. Securely strapped to your torso, bandolier-style, and gaily decorated with soothing icons, it eases social functioning to a small degree. Now, I have other patients to attend to, if you'll permit me to take my leave by wishing you a minimally satisfactory rest of your life."

The doctor spun around—his massive tail catching a cart of instruments and breakers and sending glassware smashing to the floor—and was gone. Jack sat wearily and down-in-the-dumpily for a few long minutes, then levered himself up and trudged off down the aisle formed by the curtained wards.

Almost to the exit, Jack's attention was drawn between two parted drapes.

On a table lay the Motorball Champion Dean Tesh! Bloodied and grimacing, his signature cornucopia-shaped head drooping, sparks and fizzes spurring from his numerous lumpy adjuncts, Jack Neck's hero awaited his own treatment. Assuredly, that day's game had been a runabunctious and asgardian fray! And Jack had missed it!

Impulsively, Jack entered the champion's cubicle. "Superlative Dean Tesh, if I may intrude briefly upon your eminence. I'm one of your biggest fans, and I wish to offer my condolences on your lap-sarian desuetude."

Dean Tesh boldly smiled like the rigorous roughrider he was. "Tis nothing, really, old mummenschanz. Once they jimmy open my cranial circuit flap and insert a few new wigwags, I'll be right as skysyrup!"

"Never again will you smile, but not yet shall you die. That's the gist of it, I fear, Mr. Neck."

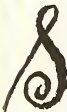


Jack blushed to be addressed by his union's highest title, in actuality undeserved. "Your magnificent spirit inspires me, lordly Dean Tesh! Somehow I too will win through my own malediction!"

Dean Tesh's ocular lenses whirled for a better look. "Worrybird, is it? I've heard Uncle Bradley has a way with them."

"Uncle Bradley? Of course! Did he not design your own world-renowned servos and shunts? If medicine holds no answers to my problem, then surely Uncle Bradley's Syntactical Fibroid Engineering must!"

And so bidding Dean Tesh a heartfelt farewell regale with benison-like affirmations of the champion's swift recovery, Jack Neck set out for Cementville.



ON JACK'S TRAIL OF TINY ARCHLESS FOOTPRINTS—outlined in fast-growing sporulating molds and luminescent quivers—could be traced through many an urban mile. Behind him already lay the evil precincts of Barrio Gama, where the Salt-legged Speckles were prone to drop rotten melons from their lofty vantages upon innocent passersby. Jack had with wiles and guiles eluded that sloppy fate. The district of Clovis Plains he had also cunningly circumnavigated, wrenching free at the last possible moment from the tenebrous grasp of a pack of

Sanghai Lilliths, whose lickerish intention it was to drag innocent Jack to their spangle-skirted leader, Luf Omen, for the irreligious ceremony known as the Ecstatic Excruciation. For several blocks thereafter he had dared to ride the Henmaker Avenue Slantwise Subway, disembarking hastily through his car's emergency exit and thence by escape-ready ladder-chute when he spotted a blockade across the tracks surely erected by the mask-grooved minions of Baron Sagarwinger. Luckily, Jack had had the foresight to obtain a transfer-waiver and so was able to board the Bala Wandery Aerial Viaduct for free, riding high and safe above the verdigrised-copper-colored towers and chimney-pots, gables and garrets of Doo-Boo-Kay Flats.

At last, as a pavonine dusk was o'spreading the haze-raddled, swing-bellied firmament, Jack Neck and his endlessly asseverating Worrybird—his face like a hairless druid's, his folded wings gloomy as a layoff notice from Krespo's—arrived at the premises of Uncle Bradley. The largest employer in gritty Cementville, the firm of Bradley and His Boyo-Boys, experts in SFE, ran round the erratic clock all 13 moons a year, turning out many and many a marvelous product, both luxuries and essentials, the former including Seductive Bergamot Filters and the latter notable for Nevermiss Nailguns. Renowned for accepting any and all engineering challenges, the more intractable the more alluring, Uncle Bradley represented Jack's best hope in the Worrybird-Removal Department.

At the towering portal to the lumbering and rachitic nine-story algae-brick-fronted manufactory that occupied 10 square blocks of Dinning Gardens, Jack made free with the bellpull: the nose of a leering brass jackanape. A minidoor opened within the gignado press-board entrance, and a functionary appeared. As the employee began to speak, Jack noted with dismay that the fellow suffered from Papyrus Mouth: his words emerged not as ordinary vocables but as separate words printed in bleasome bodily inks upon shoddy scraps of organic-tissue paper.

Jack sought to catch the emergent syllables as they splunked buccally forth, but some eluded him and whiffed away on the diddling breeze. Nervously assembling the remaining message, Jack read: *business state Bradley please with.*

"I need to solicit dear Uncle Bradley's genius in the area of invasive pesticide disengagement." Jack jerked a thick split-nailed thumb backward at his broodsome rider.

A gush of flighty papyrus. *Follow Bradley Uncle free see if me.*

Most gladly, Jack Neck entered the dynamic establishment and strode after the Papyrus Moulder. Through humming, thrumming offices and sparkly workshops—where crucibles glowed with neon-

tinged polymeric compounds and, under the nimble fingers of Machine Elves, transistors danced the Happy Chicken Trot with capacitors and optical-fluid valves—Jack and his guide threaded, until at last they stood before a ridged and fumarole-pocked door with a riveted steel rubric announcing it as

#### UNCLE BRADLEY'S CARBON CAVE

*Wait here.*

Alone, Jack hupper-hopped nervously from toe to toe. He prayed to all the saints whose names he could remember—Finbule and Flubber, Flacken and Floss, Fluffie and Farina—that Uncle Bradley possessed the secret of his salvation—and at a price he could afford.

After an almost unspiking still wait, the Papyrus Moulder returned, with Bradley still now you Uncle meet.

"Oh, thank you, kind underling! A myriad blessings of the Yongy-boggy-bo descend upon you!"

Into the fabled Hades-embowered Carbon Cave now, whose inward-seeming rattled Jack's sensory modes. The walls and ceiling of the vasty deep were layered with swiveling encrustations of Syntactical Fibroid Engineering at its most complex. Flickering readouts and mumbler speaker-grilles obtruded their cicatrice-bordered surfaces from among switches and pulls, toggles and knife-throws, finger-holes and ventilation-bands. Immemorable crystal monitors studied all surfaces, displaying upon their garnet and ametyst faces scenes from across Draught City. For a briefest-dumb-brief second, a shot of Marmoset Boulevard—right in front of Boris Crocodile's!—flashed across one, and Jack nearly wept for the nostalgic peak of mere yesterday!

In the middle of the Carbon Cave, on his luminous, numbly throne, sat Uncle Bradley. Almost totally overwhelmed with layers of SFE extrinements, a helpless carapace of gadgetry, the master of the Boyo-Boys showed bare only his snuggle-toothed and wildly inventive face, and his two striped arms, one of which terminated in chromium pincer-hook. Dangling all around inspiration-eyed Uncle Bradley were speakers and microphones, mini-monitors, telefactored manipulators, and snuff-sources, allowing him to run his many-branched enterprise without leaving his cozy sanctum.

As Jack approached tentatively across the wide checkerboard floor, he could hear from Uncle Bradley a constant stream of queries, advice, and commands.

"Lay on ten thousand more karma-watts to the Soul Furnace! Process Violet-Hundred is failing! Six hundred kilograms of Charm Catalyst into the mix! Eureka! Start a new assembly jet: personal Eyeblink Moderators! Has the Bloodroot stabilized yet? No! Lash it with the Zestful Invigorators! Cancel the Cornalog Project, and feed the experimental subjects to the Hullygees! How are the Pull Hats selling this season? That poorly? Try them with claw-tassels in plaid!"

Jack and his momentarily silent Worrybird had reached the base of Uncle Bradley's seat of power, and now the edisonic eminence took notice of the supplicant. Before Jack could even state his need, Uncle Bradley, laying a machicolated salesmen's smile upon him, was offering a concise price-size of options.

"Worrybird, correct? Of course! Obviousness obtrudes! Here are your recurring tactics, in order of cost and desirability. For five thousand crones, we inject the bird with a Circuitry Virus. In three days the bird is totally robotized. Still unremovable, of course, but its lethality is slowed by 50 percent. For three thousand crones, we attach a Secondary Imaginator to your cerebrum interstices. You promptly forget the bird is there for the rest of your allotted span. For eight hundred crones, a simple cable allows you to share the bird's own sensation. Thus you enjoy your own death, and feel it to be darwinically mandated. Lastly, for a pickling three hundred crones, we remind one of our novice Boyo-Boys to stay by your side till you succumb to the inevitable wastage. He plies you with personalized jest and frolic, and reacquaints with anyone who dares to offer you contempt!"

Jack could barely conceal his dismay. "Those—those are my only choices?"

"What more could a sensible man want? The Worrybird is an incorrigible opponent, and no one besides the recondite and rascally Uncle Bradley dares even to tamper with one! Be quick now, old

# Say twenty-seven Nuclear Novenas nightly...

gusself. Which will it be?"

Jack wobbled and wambled pitifully. "I have not even the three hundred crones for the humblest palliation. I was hoping for more triumphalist affronts and easier terms—"

"What! You dare to waste Uncle's invaluable chronospasms without funds in reserve! And then to derogate my nostrums as if you were a fellow engineer at a throwdown session of the Thinker's Sociability! Away with you, laggardly old monserath!"

Suddenly, the Papyrus Moulder was by Jack's elbow. Without pleasant hostility ado, Jack was spun about and frog-marched from the Cave of the Spherical Monarch. Just before the heavy door slammed behind him, Jack could hear Uncle Bradley resume his litany of savantlike infallibility: "Engage the services of ten thousand more Glissandos, and another dozen Kriegsteins!"

Summarily and insultingly ejected onto the cheesily porous cobble terrace before the Spherical Emporium, true night pressing down from above like a corpulent lover, Jack knew himself at the end of both his abilities and the universe's possibilities. The weight of the Worrybird seemed suddenly Atlasian. At the first "Never again, but not yet!", every nerve in Jack's poor frame thrilled with galvanic imbrogliness. He hung his head, able to focus only on the snailskin cobbles.

Three tags of pagrus skittered by just then, and without much hope Jack used the last of his scanty vigor to retrieve them.

Seek Saint Placere.

WAS VERACIOUS AND LOREDELY MIDNIGHT come without fear of fleeing misrecognition to occupy Drudge City like a famously conquering cubic khan. Much too low in the sky hung a sherryberry scoop-hollowed partial moon like a slice of vanilla-ice-cream-sheened cantaloupe half-eaten by a finicky godling. Stars shown in the space between the tips of the errant satellite's horns. Insect-seeking sweatbeats, their calls of "stitch-stitch!" leavening the mist,

thronged the curvaceous canyons formed by the tottering towers of home and office, both kinds of hobbledehoy establishment darkened as their inhabitants blissfully or troublously slept. Only meeps and monks, strumpets and troubadours, wittings and maularks were abroad at this hour—at least in this dismal section of Drudge City. Perhaps among the delightful theaters in the district known as Prisbeys's Heaves, or in the saucersharping cafes of Mechanics' Ramble, good citizens yet disported themselves without fear of encountering lurking angina-andlers or burrow-bums. And surely—most sadly of a certainty—at Boris Crocodile's Beaneery and Caustics Bar, ghost-eyed Nori Nougat was even at this moment frugging with ledge-browed Jack Zither, while Stinky Frankie Konk tortured banshee wails from his hybrid instrument.

But out here, where putrid Ashmolean Alley and rancid Rotifer Gangway ranked as the only streets of distinction, no such gaiety could be found. There lolloped only a besmirched and bedaubed and bedemoned Jack Neck, bustlingly dragging himself down block after block, in search of Saint Placere.

The last Jack had heard—from Dirty Bill Brownback, in fact—rumors of a saint sighting had recently wafted from out Ubldio way. No guarantee that said sighted saint was named Placere, or that he was even still present. Saints had a discerning propensity to phase-shift at random. Yet poor Jack Neck had no other phantom to pursue, so thence he now leathered.

Two hours past the night's novel, Jack Neck emerged from encircling buildings onto bare-tiled Pringle Plaza. In the middle of the civic space ruminated an eyelid-shuttered naked saint.

The saint had once been human. After much spiritual kenning and

abstemious indulgences, making the choice to give him- or herself up entirely to the avariciously bountiful forces of the Indeterminate, the human had morphologized into a saint. The saint's trunk had widened and spread into a bulbous heap, from which sprouted withered legs and off-kilter arms, but no visible generative parts. Instead, out of the trunk at queer angles protruded numerous quasi-organic spouts and intakes similar to rusty gutterpipes. The saint's neck was a corded barrel supporting a pointy-peaked head on which the features had wandered north, south, east, and west. Overall, the creature was a pebbled mushroom-white, and three times the size of Jack. Around this living interface with the Indeterminate, the air wavered whorlfully.

Humble as a wet cat, Jack approached the Saint. When the Worrybird-carrier was within a few yards of the strange being, the saint opened his eyes.

"Are thee Placere?" nervously intoned Jack, who had never cozened with a saint before, nor ever thought to.

"Aye."

"I was sent to thee. This bumptious bird I would begone."

The saint pondered for a chronospasm. "You must perambulate round the Inverted Stupa for three hours, reciting without cease, 'Always once again, and perhaps now.'"

"This will cause the Worrybird to relinquish its hold?"

"Not at all. The procedure will simply give me further time to peer into the Indeterminate. But nonetheless, you must attend with precision to my instructions, upon pain of easterbation."

"As you say, oh saint."

Luckily, the Inverted Stupa was only half a league onward. Hurrying with renewed hope, Jack soon reached the famous monument. In the middle of another peopleless plaza, lit fitfully by torches of witch's-hair, was a raised pit of no small dimensions. Looking down over the rail, Jack saw the vertiginous walls of the Inverted Stupa, lighted windows stretching down to the earth's borborygmous bowels, deeper by far than even Baron Sugarlinger's realm.

Without delay, Jack began his circular begira, chanting his saintly mantra.

"Always once again, and perhaps now. Always once again, and perhaps now ..."

The Worrybird seemed in no wise discommoded by Jack's croaking exertions. Jack tried not to lose his resurgent tentative cheer. At long last, just when Jack's legs—both good and bad—felt ready to snap, a nearby clock tolled five, releasing him to return to the saint.

Saint Placere sat unchanged, a yeasty enigmatic effigy with a face like an anthropomorphic cartoon breadloaf.

"You have done well, old mockmurfy. Come close now, and cover my sacred Intake Number Nine with your palm."

Jack side-stepped up to the saint, entering the zone where his vision burlied. He raised his hand toward the properly labeled body-pipe, then capped the opening with the flat of his permanently work-roughened hand.

Instantly, the insidious and undeniable vacuum-suck of 10 dozen black holes!

Jack's hand was quickly pulled in. Before he could even gasp, his shoulder was pressed to the treacherous Intake Number Nine. Then Jack felt himself drawn even farther in! Oddly he experienced no pain. Only, he was sure, because he was already dead.

Soon Jack was ingulped headwise up to both shoulders. His hump delayed his swallowment slightly, but then, thanks to a swelling surge of pop-power, even his abused hump was past the rim.

And the Worrybird too? Apparently not! Poked off like a potato skin was that man-faced mordaunt! But what of their commingled Akashic Aura? Only Gossip Time would tell ...

Continued on page 89



# Come As You Are



**D**on your favorite cloak and head to the 1998 GEN CON® Game Fair. You'll find a diverse range of fantasy and science fiction memorabilia, Renaissance clothiers, sword vendors, and more.

And another 20,000 sci-fi and fantasy fans will be there with you.

We also offer over 2,000 different gaming events, including live-action roleplaying set in the Dark Ages, miniatures, and computer, card, and board games.

The summer's biggest adventure draws near. Don't miss it.

Make your reservations for the  
1998 GEN CON Game Fair.



August 6—9, 1998  
Midwest Express Center  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

For more information  
call Andon Unlimited  
at [614] 856-3976  
or find them on the Web at  
<[www.andonunlimited.com](http://www.andonunlimited.com)>.



## Travel through time in search of a *Legacy* you'll want to inherit.



ABOVE: Time is of the essence in Journeyman Project 3: Legacy of Time. BELOW: Bring two movies to life in the Aliens/Predator Customizable Card Game.

I HAVE TO SEIZE MY REAS UP FRONT. I LOVE TIME TRAVEL. I love it as a conceit in almost every genre of entertainment. Half the stories I have published concern time travel; I've played board, computer, and card games that dealt with time travel; and one of my longest running role-playing campaigns was with BTRC's *TimeLords* system. Given all that, I have been looking forward to the new computer adventure game, *Journeyman Project 3: Legacy of Time*, since I got the first press release about it. The preview screen shots just made me want to play all the more. And finally, after months of waiting, I got to play it.

In *L of T*, it is the 24th century and you play Gage Blackwood, Agent 5 of the Temporal Security Agency. For eleven years you have been defending the time stream from changes that might destroy the present. In this episode, saving time is going to require you going back to visit the lost civilizations of Atlantis, El Dorado, and Shangri-La. You

have to find out why these cities were destroyed and how events in these lost civilizations hold the key for humanity's chances of survival in the present. Who could ask more from a game? Not only do you get to time travel and save the Earth, but you also get to visit Atlantis, El Dorado, and Shangri-La!

From the advance screen shots, I knew that three lost cities were going to be beautiful, but the screen shots don't really do justice to the game environments because they are only in two dimensions. Once you fire up the game, you experience cities in full 360 degree, panoramic VR through the use of Infinite Pictures' Smooth Move tool for producing spherical VR "rooms." In game terms you use the cursor to change your point of view; you can look all the way around you, plus all the way up and all the way down. You can stop in the middle of the bridge to Shangri-La and look down the canyon at the splendor of the white temples. While you're standing there, you can also look up the valley at the wastes of Tibet and down at the boards of the bridge and the river far beneath them, and up into the sky at the sun shining over the mountain.

In addition to the VR spheres in which you adventure, the game also uses a lot of Quick Time video, both for cut scenes and for your talks with the game's 18 interactive characters. There are another 18 characters who appear only in the cut scenes or "cinematics," as the game menu calls them. The movies are all shot with live actors (as opposed to the digitized ones in games like *Blade Runner*) playing their roles against computer generated backgrounds and with the game's three alien races who are represented by computer generated characters. Jerry Rector, whose work includes roles on *NYPD Blue* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, plays Gage Blackwood. Michele Scarselli, who plays the renegade Agent 3, has also guest starred on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, but is probably best known for playing Susan Francisco in the *Alien Nation* TV movies. Matt Weinhold provides the voice for Arthur, the artificial intelligence who aids you in your missions. The actor himself even gets to

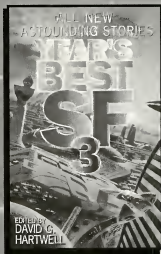
make a cameo at the end of the game. They, and all the actors, do a fine job, and they get a lot of face time. By my loose timing, there is about an hour's worth of "cinematics" contained on the four CD ROMs that hold the game, and the artists did just as good a job on those backgrounds as they did on the VR ones.

There is, however, more to *L of T* than admiring the scenery. After picking the clues from the cut scenes, you then have to navigate through the VR spheres that



# LET YEAR'S BEST SF 3

BLOW YOUR MIND, SCORCH YOUR  
SENSES, AND ERASE YOUR INHIBITIONS...



0-06-105901-3 • \$6.50

WITH STORIES FROM:

**Gregory Benford**

**Terry Bisson**

**Robert Silverberg**

**Greg Egan**

**William Gibson**

**James Patrick Kelly**

**Gene Wolfe**

AND MORE...

DON'T MISS ITS TWO DISTINGUISHED PREDECESSORS...



**YEAR'S BEST SF**

0-06-105641-3 • \$5.99



**YEAR'S BEST SF 2**

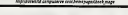
0-06-105746-0 • \$5.99

*"Thoroughly enjoyable... a rich  
jolt of good fiction."*—Locus

ON SALE NOW WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD.

**HarperPrism**  
A Division of HarperCollins Publishers  
<http://www.harpersprism.com>

Optional paid svc available



\_\_\_\_\_

Adults over 18. Entertainment only. Optional paid bar available.

---



Inside the room there is a file tree of resources available from the WebBPG server that include counters, terrain for the map, sounds, an initiative tracker, and character sheets for R. Talsorian's *Cyberpunk 2020* & *Mekton Z*, FASA's *Earthdawn*, and *FreeQuest*. *FreeQuest* is an introductory role-playing game designed by the people at WebBPG. *Earthdawn* and *FreeQuest* include soft copies

of their rules. Also on the desktop is a map that can be set for hexes or squares. In the chat space where everyone talks, players can change their login names and the colors their typing appears in (very handy). In the top left of the desktop is the dice tool for making rolls. There are hot buttons for dice from four sided to percentile, but there is also a formula box where you can enter whatever combination of dice your game requires. In *Pony Shai*, to roll check with a skill of 10, the formula would be 1D6+1D6+10. That produces a roll of one positive die six added to one negative die six and 10 added to the result. The capital "D" tells the program to re-roll sixes. This feature combined with the chatroom alone would let you play games, but combine it with the map so everyone can see where everyone else is standing, and you have a pretty good recreation of face to face role-playing.

In a couple ways, WebRPG is actually better than face to face gaming. Take the character sheets. You can build them customized to the game you're playing, and you can include dice formulas and sounds on them. If the GM asks for a strength roll, you don't have to gather your dice and look up your strength, you just click on the button by your strength stat that rolls your strength check. Character sheets can be linked to the counters on the map so that double clicking on a counter will bring up the character sheet. The chat window contains a whisper feature that allows your typing to only be displayed to one other person instead of the whole room. Players and GMs can use this to trade information that the group at large wouldn't have, and players can use it to chat off topic with one another without disrupting the flow of the game. Very nice if you have a comedian in the party.

Currently the WebRPG software is at version 1.4.1, so for all the things it does well, it is far from perfect. For instance, items have to be cut and pasted from the toolbox to the map. They can't be dragged and dropped. One of our players uses a 56.6k connection and he has had problems with WebRPG losing track of him in the middle of play. You can change the colors of the chat type, but you can't change the font or size of it. The map is a fixed size, and you can't group items so that they all move at once. This means you have to be careful where you setup the action because if you need more space on one side of the map, you are going to have to move all the counters one at a time to create more room. Also, you can't draw on the map, you can only place counters. It is harder to set up a hallway by placing two rows of two hex long walls than it is to simply draw two long lines.

And of course the hardest part of role-playing over WebRPG is having to type instead of talk. This is sort of a mixed flow. It is harder to establish the rhythms of banter that you're used to having when talking if you are typing, but, on the other hand, play tends to stay more focused on the game itself rather than drifting into off topic arguments and discussions. Combat, if more laborious to describe, can actually

be easier to follow since there is a written record of what everyone has done and when he or she did it. Non-combat discussions take some getting used to since, as in a regular chatroom, you are often responding to something the person typed two minutes ago, but we have found if that if you are consistent about tagging who each comment is directed at and if the GM gives a few beats to let characters oppose each other's actions (For example, if one character types, "I take Ray's Bic and write the check," everyone is better off to wait a few seconds to see if Ray says, "I'm not carrying my Bic and give Al for touching my shirt.") then it all flows pretty smoothly. If your favorite role-play campaign is on hold because you or your gaming buddies have moved away, then I highly recommend getting them to download a copy of WebRPG. You'll be back in business in no time at all.

Based on two 20th Century Fox properties that have never appeared on the big screen together but have been a best-selling comic book for Dark Horse Comics, the *Aliens/Predator Customizable Card Game* (Precedence Publishing, 1998 \$8.95) is a three-sided battle that pits gang ho Space Marines against vicious Aliens against calculating Predators. Set in the future, the cards feature scenes from the *Aliens* movies, the *Predator* movies, and original photographs created for the game using recreated props and sets from those films. Each race has its own 60-card starter pack, but the fifteen card booster packs are generic to all three races. Play is on a space station and follows the usual path of collectable card games, with players laying down locations, items, allies, and special events, each trying to obliterate the other. The three-way play adds an interesting twist with each race pursuing its own tactics. If you're a fan of outer space mayhem, then this game is worth a look.

The *Babylon Project* is a role-playing game set in the Babylon 5 Universe. I don't have the basic game book so I can't tell you much about it except that the basic rules don't contain any system for ship to ship combat. If you want to do that, then you have to buy the *Earthforce Sourcebook* (Chameleon Eclectic Entertainment, Inc., Blacksburg, Virginia, \$18.00). It contains not only the space combat system but the counters and ship control sheets for Earthforce ships and a few of the Narn, Centauri, and Minbari ships for players to have fights with. The system does try to reflect the vectored movement that ships portray in the series, but there is no attempt to try and do this in 3D. The sourcebook also contains a lot of background on Earthforce, more than you will find on the CD Guide (and it doesn't come with an annoying sound track). Sinclair and Sheridan both made it into the book, but Ivanova didn't. She doesn't rank high enough. Ever wonder what the collar pips on the Earthforce uniforms mean? They are in here, as are listings of weapons, equipment, and Earthforce procedures. A complete guide for Earthforce characters. □

## THERE IS NO GOD!

THE  
GUTS  
TO  
QUESTION?  
Apostate  
Religious Faith  
WITH VENGEANCE!

(E. K. STONE)

THE  
POWERFUL AND FIERCE PHILOSOPHY OF  
FANTASY/HORROR ARTIST  
ERIK STONE

...THE QUESTION OF CREATION IS UNFAVORABLE  
CONTEMPLATION...

DO WE DARE QUESTION THE WORD OF GOD  
WITHOUT FEAR OF REPRISAL TO DO SO FAIRLY  
ALLEGORIZE US FROM OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS  
WHO DON'T EVEN ASK AND ARE THE SOCIAL  
MAJORITY. IT IS A KIND OF PSYCHIC SLAVERY. SO  
WHY STOP? I BELIEVE IN IT. I FEEL, LONG, ALONE,  
CUT OFF FROM ALL THE SAVES, AND YET SAY THAT  
I HAVE A REEL YOU, THAT I AM JUST AN  
MORALLY CORRUPT AS ANYONE. EMBRACING THE  
REALM OF RUINER PACT AND EXPLOITING IT AS A  
MYSTERY OF DARKNESS, WHERE AT LONG I CAN  
CALL MYSELF A FREE THING. IF I HADN'T BEEN  
BORN, THEN BELIEVE BECOMES THE EMBRACE WILL  
BE LET THE SPIRITS OF DARKNESS AND THE  
ETERNAL FLAMES OF FIRE HAVE CONTINUE!

Black Hardcover, Silver Foil Stamped, 122pgs.  
\$14.95 + \$2.00 S/H, \$16.95 (US)  
(OHIO: OHIO, OHIO: OHIO)

TO: STONE GALLERY, 103 S. AL Street, Suite 211  
Midwest City, OK 73110

(Phone: 405-271-1111, Fax: 405-271-1111)

\*CAUTION: EXTREMELY NASTY MATERIAL\*

## TOP SHELF BOOKS

Collectible and Award-Winning  
Fantasy & Science Fiction  
First Editions

ON-LINE CATALOG  
[www.topshelfbooks.com](http://www.topshelfbooks.com)

Signed Firsts - UK Editions  
Clickable Dustjackets

P.O. Box 451

Seattle, WA, 98142-0451

Phone: (206) 578-4455

John W. Knott, Jr.

B O O K S E L L E R

First Print Editions of

Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror & Mystery

Collections and single items purchased.

Web or Phone

8453 Early Bud Way, Laurel, MD 20723

Phone / FAX: (301) 517-8427

E-mail: [jwknott@midlark.com](mailto:jwknott@midlark.com)

## Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, Mystery

Monthly catalogs listing the newest books and videos.  
US & British titles. Customized catalogs for "wish lists"

All catalogs titles are DISCOUNTED

Send \$1.00 with complete mailing address to:

CHRONICLES BOOKSHOP

372 S. Shelby #10, Shelby, MD 21146

[www.chroniclsbookshop.com](http://www.chroniclsbookshop.com)

## Dancraft's Mousepad Coasters

are a fun and practical gift for all alien enthusiasts. Six piece set comes with an acrylic holder. Two color print **glows in the dark!** These high quality 3 1/2" x 3 1/2" coasters are dishwasher safe, have non-skid bottoms and are gift boxed. Arrange coasters to make your own customized mousepad.

Your choice of **Allen Head** or **Allen w/World** \$11.99 per set or both for \$19.99. Please include \$3.50 for S&H. Send check or money order to:

**Dancraft, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 8160**

**Cranston, RI 02920**

Phone or fax your order for faster service.

800-510-4938 FAX 401-272-4940



Accepted • Sorry no COD's.



## DEEP FUTURE

Continued from page 38

the visions wrapped about the column's surface cease, fade to quiescent gold.

The Flyer spreads its vast wingspan wide, raises its scimitar-beaked head high with dignity.

It sends forth a burst of pheromones which takes time and effort to translate, and it pauses frequently so that the Thinkers might catch up, or ask questions.

The information it imparts is indeed momentous, is almost too strange to be believed.

The Flyer has discovered, on its travels among the many inhabited worlds of the out-there, the very last remnants of humankind, the beings that myth claims were the very first to attain intelligence on planet Earth.

And the Flyer describes its encounter with these beings, a few straggling survivors far from home, hopelessly devolved and hardly cognizant — but for half-remembered myths and little-believed legends — of their grand heritage.

The Young Thinker, its imagination stirred, stands and fires a question: But what do these humans do? it wants to know.

Do? replies the Flyer, as ever with that note of humorous indulgence which makes the Young Thinker feel naive and immature.

Do? the Flyer responds. Why, they do nothing, nothing but dream.

## "CONCEPT"

**WESTERCON 51\***

The 50th Anniversary of Westerncon

**July 2-5, 1998**

**Mission Valley Marriott Hotel  
San Diego, CA**

**Guests of Honor**

**Katherine Kurtz  
Scott MacMillan**

**Sue Dawe**

**Dave W. Clark**

*Fantasy Artist*

*Fan Guest of Honor*

**Featuring**

*J. Michael Straczynski - Babylon 5*

*Dr. Kary B. Mullis - Scientist*

*Forrest J. Ackerman - Sci-Fi Historian*

*and much more!*

**MEMBERSHIPS: \$20 SUPPORTING**

**ATTENDING MEMBERSHIPS \$55 until 5/31/98**

**or \$60 at the door (for the full program)**

**"Concept"/Westercon 51\***

**P.O. Box 15471**

**San Diego, CA 92175**

**<http://www.westercon.org/51>**

\*Westerncon is a registered service mark of the Los Angeles Convention Center. "CONCEPT" is a service mark of the California Association for the Advancement of Speculative Media, Inc., a California non-profit corporation.

## FREE CATALOG and \$5 OFF FIRST ORDER!

*Science Fiction, Horror, and  
Fantasy Book Prices that  
are out of this World!*

## The BARGAIN BOOK WAREHOUSE

*A Discount Book Catalog*

**Savings up to 80% on Popular Fiction!**

**Call or write for free catalog and \$5 coupon**

**good with your first order! Categories**

**include: Science fiction, horror, fantasy, mys-**

**teries. Ask for our Mysteries By Mail catalog.**

**Isol Over 800 of the newest and best**

**in-print mysteries—past favorites, too!**

**or call 1-800-722-0726**

**or call 1-800-722-0726**

**or call 1-800-722-0726**

**or call 1-800-722-0726**

**or call 1-800-722-0726**

**or call 1-800-722-0726**

**or call 1-800-722-0726**

**or call 1-800-722-0726**

**or call 1-800-722-0726**

**or call 1-800-722-0726**

**or call 1-800-722-0726**

**A**LL THE LONG DAY, THEN, THE Young Thinker contemplates the words of the Flyer, and gazes upon the wonders of the golden column, learning much of the other more recent denizens of the planet — but its imagination has been fired, and for all the parade of marvels across the golden column it cannot forget the Flyer's description of the humans, so far away across the out-there, who have survived for so long, one billion years and more, and dreamed.

And in time the sun goes down on another day and darkness steals across the land, and stars appear in the night sky, constellations vastly reconfigured compared to those we know today. The Thinkers rise and depart the golden column, full of wonder at their new knowledge, sadness that the pilgrimage is over. Slowly they file from the foreshore and begin the long journey to their breeding grounds in the north.

The Young Thinker, bringing up the rear with its mate, passes the chasm in which they were imprisoned and considers their timely rescue. It contemplates everything it has learned this past eventful day, the great history of the planet and the news conveyed by the Flyer, and it experiences an overwhelming surge of joy, and hope.

And, somewhere, a human dreams. □



## JACK NECK

Continued from page 82

Within seconds, Jack was fully through Intake Number Nine. Then began a journey of sense-dwarfing intricacy. Through a maze of bloodlit veiny pipes Jack flowed like the slorp at Krespo's, until he finally shot out of a funnel-mouth into ultracolored drifts of sheer abundant nothingness that smelled like a bosomy woman and tasted like Shugworth's Lemon Coddle. Here existence was a matter of wayward wafts and dreamy enticements, so considerably unlike the pestiferous hurly-burly of mundane existence. Time evaporated, and soon Jack did too...

Early morning in Pringle Plaza, sunlight like the drip of candyapple glaze. Sanitation chimps were about their cleaning, sweeping litter and leaf into the open mouths of attendant roadhogs. A traveling preacher had unfolded his pocket altar and was preaching the doctrine of Klacktoevdsedsteen to a yawning group of bow-tied office dandies. Saint Fiacre, having just given a lonely little girl the second head she had requested, suddenly quivered all over as if stricken by Earthquake Ague, then decanted a real-as-mud, sprightly-as-flea Jack Neck from Outflow Number Three.

Jack got woozily to his tiny feet. "Saint Fiacre, I thank thee!"

"Say twenty-seven Nuclear Novenas nightly, invoking the names of Gretchen Growl, Mercy Luna and the Rowrbazze. And do not stick your foolish mummery's head out any more windows without forethought."

And then Saint Fiacre was gone.

Having polished off his supper and seen the merry Motherway licker attending to his bonedog privates, mawkly old Jack Neck now commonly got to Boris Crocodile's a little later each night. Those Nuclear Novenas took time, and he did not trust either his tongue or his pledged determination after a shot of Dinky Pachinko's dumble-um. Neither could his saviology be allowed to interfere during the day with Jack's ardent eyeballing of the exploits of the mighty Dean Tesh, Motorball Mauder! So postprandial were his doxologies.

But despite the slight change in his schedule, Jack still entered the Beasnery and Cansies Bar in mid-stridulation of hookah-banjo, still found his favorite reserved barstool awaiting him, still feasted his cheamy eyes on the firestone gwooteners atrot, and still affirmed to any and all who would lend an ear, "Yessir, assuming you can get through the rough spots, life can turn out mighty sweet!" □

*This story was inspired by the paintings of Chris Moss. For more information, contact Chris Moss, PO Box 24631, Edina, MN 55424.*

# New Poetry Contest \$48,000.00 in Prizes

**The National Library of Poetry to award 250 total prizes to amateur poets in coming months**

Owings Mills, Maryland - The National Library of Poetry has just announced that \$48,000.00 in prizes will be awarded over the next 12 months in the brand new North American Open Amateur Poetry Contest. The contest is open to everyone and entry is free.

"We're especially looking for poems from new or unpublished poets," indicated Howard Ely, spokesperson for The National Library of Poetry. "We have a ten year history of awarding large prizes to talented poets who have never before won any type of writing competition."

### How To Enter

Anyone may enter the competition simply by sending in **ONLY ONE** original poem, any subject, any style, to:

The National Library of Poetry

Suite 17512

1 Poetry Plaza

Owings Mills, MD 21117-6282

Or enter online at [www.poetry.com](http://www.poetry.com)

The poem should be no more than 20 lines, and the poet's name and address must appear on the top of the page. "All poets who enter will receive a response concerning their artistry, usually within seven weeks," indicated Mr. Ely.

### Possible Publication

Many submitted poems will also be considered for inclusion in one of The National Library of Poetry's forthcoming handbooks



Gordon Sletts of Virginia, pictured above, is the latest Grand Prize Winner at The National Library of Poetry's North American Open Amateur Poetry Contest. As the big winner, he was awarded \$1,000.00 in cash.

anthologies. Previous anthologies published by the organization have included *On the Threshold of a Dream*, *Days of Future's Past*, *Of Diamonds and Rust*, and *Moments More to Go*, among others.

"Our anthologies routinely sell out because they are truly enjoyable reading, and they are also a sought-after sourcebook for poetic talent," added Mr. Ely.

### World's Largest Poetry Organization

Having awarded over \$150,000.00 in prizes to poets worldwide in recent years, The National Library of Poetry, founded in 1982 to promote the artistic accomplishments of contemporary poets, is the largest organization of its kind in the world. Anthologies published by the organization have featured poems by more than 100,000 poets.

Enter online at [www.poetry.com](http://www.poetry.com)

© 1997 The National Library of Poetry

## ROBERT A. MADLE

B ♦ ♦ ♦ O ♦ ♦ K ♦ S

Science Fiction & Fantasy  
Magazines & Books  
From 1900 to Present

Many Rare & Unusual Items  
Collections Purchased (Large & Small)  
96 Page Catalog Send \$5.00 to:

Department SFA  
4406 Bestor Drive  
Rockville, Maryland 20853  
301-460-4712

## Your Complete SF Bookstore in the Mail!

WEINBERG BOOKS has merged operations with The Stars Our Destination, a large storefront science fiction bookstore. We publish a monthly catalog (listed first class) featuring everything new in the SF/Fantasy/Horror fields, from books to paperbacks to numerous small press publications not available anywhere else. Send \$1.00 for our latest catalog. You won't be disappointed.

**WEINBERG BOOKS at  
The Stars Our Destination**  
1021 W. Belmont, Chicago IL 60657



America's Premier  
Science Fiction Event!  
Over 300 Guests include:

**Ray Bradbury**  
**C.J. Cherryh**  
**Roger Dean**  
**Harlan Ellison**  
**James P. Hogan**  
**Larry Niven**  
**Jerry Pournelle**

and featuring

**Anthony Daniels**  
Star Wars' C3PO  
**Jeff Conaway**  
Babylon 5's Zack Allan

**Jonathan Harris**  
Lost in Space's Dr. Smith

**Ray Harryhausen**  
Legendary F/X Wizard

**Richard Hatch**  
Battlestar Galactica's Apollo

**Patricia Tallman**  
Babylon 5's Lyta Alexander

**Trey Parker & Matt Stone**  
Creators of South Park



**Sept. 3 - 6, 1998**

Hyatt Regency Atlanta  
& Atlanta Apparel Mart

For Info Call (770) 909-0115 or  
Write: Box 47696, Atlanta, GA  
30362-0696, or link to:  
<http://www.dragoncon.org>

## INTERNET

By Cory Doctorow

SERIOUS LITERARY CRITICISM HAS A LONG and honored tradition of reasoned commentary on the written word. Zzzzz. My attention-span simply doesn't have the muscle for Northrop Frye. The Book-A-Minute page, at <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~ss1/bookminute/> is seemingly designed for me and my ilk. The classics of SF are compressed into hilarious—yet informative—abridgements, such as this one, for *The Collected Works of Edgar Allen Poe*: "Some Guy: Oh no, I'm buried alive! Narrator: I died. Raven: Nevermore. The End." These things are like pop-con: betcha can't read just one!

Swavie Wojtowicz has put together a virtual clearinghouse for science-fiction art on the Web at <http://home.interstat.net/~slawcio/arts.html> with hundreds and hundreds of links. While it'd be nice to have some annotation with the links—some idea of what's behind them—there's no denying the usefulness of this resource. Don't miss Swavie's own work, at <http://home.interstat.net/~slawcio/myart.html>.

Call me a blind patriot, but as a Canadian, I gotta say, it's a damned shame that Canada's fine SF magazines get so little play down there in the US. For example, Dale Sproule and Sally McBride do a very tasty little 'zine



called *TransVersions*, where you'll find choice morsels from my fellow Canucks: De Lint, Sawyer, Goleish, Stewart, et al. Swing by the *TransVersions* site at <http://www.astro.psu.edu/users/harlow/transversions> and see.

I got this tip straight from the competition: James Patrick Kelly—who writes a (not nearly as cool but still worthy) Internet column for *Another SF Magazine*—wrote to tell me about *Seeing Ear Theater*, at <http://www.scifi.com/set/originals/dinosaur/>. SET has revived the grand tradition of professional SF radio-play adaptations and put



them on the Web. Jim mentioned a roster of Cool, Big-Name Writers who are scheduled to appear on SET, and then told me I couldn't mention them by name. Argh. Thanks, Jim.

Taking the prize for best company-name and funniest idea is Cheapass Games, at <http://www.cheapass.com/homepages/carywt>. At roughly \$6 each, these board-games would be worth a shot even if you'd never heard of them. Now that you have, you'll know that Cheapass publishes some of the most addictive, playable boardgames on the planet. Thanks to Martha Soukup for bringing 'em to my attention.

Cary Thomas wrote to tell me about her indices to *Locust and Analog* at <http://four-world.com/serve.com/homepages/carywt>—heroic projects, to be sure, but I was dubious. The Internet Speculative Fiction Database (<http://www.sfsite.com/isfdb/>) already does a great job of this, and cross-references to a bunch of other indices, too. What Cary failed to mention was that her databases are *downloadable*—they can be saved to your very own hard-drive, for off-line perusing.

Tom MacInneco hepped me to Daddy-O's Drive-In Dirt, at <http://www.mst3kinfo.com/daddy/index.html>. Tom is the king of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* trivia (he got me hooked, too), and he seemed pretty excited by this site. Daddy-O's covers the latest scoop on all the stinky movies that got revitalized by *MST3K*, attempting to answer the question, "How did all this trash end up getting produced?"

Ernest Hogan's "cybergonzo thriller" *Brainpan Fallout* has been published online, with extensive annotations from the author, along with "random illustrations." The story, available at [www.senselessbeauty.com/hogan/brain1.html](http://www.senselessbeauty.com/hogan/brain1.html), is a zany, first-person account of the misadventures of a crazed bike messenger, and is well worth the read.

Keep watching the skies, and send your recommendations to [doctorow@well.com](mailto:doctorow@well.com).

SEE THE OUTER RIM THE WAY IT  
USED TO BE

ONE PACK OF 4 NEW HOPE - FIFTEEN BLACK-  
BORDER CARDS TO GIVE YOUR DECK THAT  
ADDED TWIST

GET READY FOR HYPERSPACE - YOU'LL  
GET THREE NEW SHIPS TO PLAY WITH

EXPAND THE RANKS OF RED AND  
GOLD SQUADRONS

6 DIFFERENT COLLECTIBLE DECK  
HOLDBOXES - YOU DO HAVE SIX  
DIFFERENT DECKS, DON'T YOU?

16 BRAND NEW CARDS IN  
EVERY BOX - YOU GOTTA  
LOOK A LITTLE THING

FIND OUT JUST HOW VALUABLE A  
VAPORATOR CAN BE

EACH BOX HOLDS 150 CARDS SLEEVED - 2  
DECKS AND ROOM TO SPARE FOR A LUCKY  
HARRIET'S FOOT!

4 PREMIERE EXPANSION PACKS - THE FOUNDATION  
THAT STARTED IT ALL AND THE CORE OF YOUR  
TOURNAMENT-WINNING DECK DESIGN

SPECIAL PACK OF 18 NEW BLACK-BORDER CARDS - JUMP-START  
YOUR JOURNEY STRATEGY... OR USE 'EM TO REAT YOUR BEST  
FRIEND AT THE DINING ROOM TABLE

LEVELS THE TOURNAMENT PLAYING FIELD - GO INTO BATTLE  
CONFIDENTLY PREPARED TO HANDLE YOUR OPPONENT'S  
PESTY COUNTER ASSAULT, NAUSEOUS LURGE, SCANNING  
CREW, COLLISION!, TAILOR ROLL!!!



IF IT'S IN YOUR HEAD IT'S IN HERE

STAR WARS™ CUSTOMIZABLE CARD GAME™  
OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT SEALED DECKS - SPRING 1998

DECIPHER™  
The Art of Great Games®

[www.decipher.com](http://www.decipher.com)

Official Star Wars Web Site:  
[www.starwars.com](http://www.starwars.com)

TM & © 1998 Lucasfilm Ltd. All rights reserved. Used under authorization by Decipher Inc. TM, © & © 1998 Decipher Inc. All rights reserved. Decipher Inc. Box 56, Norwalk, VA 22051



# VANGERS

*one for the road.*

Get ready to squash it, scrape it and trade it.



Transforming your reality in Spring '98!

Visit your local retailer or call 1-800-789-1534 for additional information  
and try the free demo at [www.imagicgames.com](http://www.imagicgames.com)

P.O. Box 13491 • Research Triangle Park • NC 27709



Vangers is a trademark and Interactive Magic is a registered trademark of Interactive Magic, Inc. © Copyright 1998 Interactive Magic, Inc. All Rights Reserved.